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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the regional extent of the syndrome of writing inadequacy among students in first-year college and university composition classes, to identify and categorize errors, to determine what instructors as well as students felt about first-year composition inadequacies, and to provide a profile of composition errors that could lead to a productive methodological approach to minimize the errors. The study was limited to 31 instructors and 231 students from most regions of the country. The instrument used was a survey testing competency with essay writing principles, grammar, and composition. Instructors unanimously agreed on the inadequacy of student skills. Examination of the findings revealed the need for additional required courses in teaching methods and required courses to insure instructor competency in subject matter. (Author/MSE)

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WRITING PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE FRESHMEN

AN ANALYSIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

If freshmen composition students in colleges and universities were given the proper motivation stimulus, exposure to a highly personalized teaching approach, more information about specific methods and procedures of writing, specific knowledge of college and university writing demands, and proper educational value emphasis, students, nationwide, can do a great deal to achieve a mark of excellence in writing. Without the aforementioned efforts, students often lose interest in writing compositions, and their low writing scores contribute to the increase of low essay grades.

There was a great quandary among students, administrators and teachers about writing. Almost daily, on the local scene, one was confronted by a news article which deplored the entire predicament. The situation was indeed serious and merited innovative techniques as well as emphasis on basic skills. Many cried out for these basic skills, declaring that getting back to the "old ways" was better. Many said that teaching writing was anachronistic.

The blame was placed at one time or another on the environment, on family structure, on teachers, on student apathy, on world preoccupation with a possible nuclear holocaust, on culture. More important than placing blame are continued efforts to solve the problems, efforts which will enable students to gain knowledge and efforts which will bring about a continued drive for innovation to cure writing inadequacies.

One may sometimes feel that a certain weakness in writing is peculiar to his geographical area or classroom situation, but exploration of the field was needed to determine the range and category of writing weaknesses. A rededication to the task of finding a solution must become the concern and activity of educators.

Some have said, on a local level, that a certain numbness that prevents understanding of writing or application of any principles which might have been taught has beset students, for the carry-over from rule to application, in many instances, has failed to take place in writing assignments by first-year composition students.

The Problem

The problem of concern in this paper was the vicious cycle that characterized the gap in knowledge of writing principles that was evident in compositions written by first-year college and university students. The cycle was perpetuated by the failure of some instructors to present clear-cut approaches to writing, by their failure to teach grammar in detail, through the persistence of some instructors in placing emphasis on the GPA as an end for good writing rather than on individual accomplishment at whatever level of knowledge the student had, and through their failure to offer a real-world avenue for communication beyond the classroom. Evidence of writing inadequacies appeared in the form of papers without a statement of commitment (a thesis sentence); by the presence of fragments and run-on sentences, weak analyses of literature, poorly written term papers, lack of sentence sense and thematic unity; in the presence of half-paragraphs without transitional expressions; indeed, in the presence of almost innumerable errors in the essay examination.

Stemming from this cycle, this inadequacy, were instructor frustration, student confusion and disenchantment. The problem was caused and compounded by the fact that many college students held jobs to support families or to pay tuition and were unable to devote as much time as necessary for assignments; some students did not see the value of attention given to the basics, to the demand for order in writing which makes for better communication. Some did not know what to do about writing because of nebulous assignments. Instructors, in some instances, assumed that students coming to them in the first-year English program knew more about writing than they did.

A diagnostic exercise, if given, readily revealed the lack of preparedness on the part of the student; thus the rate of low grades in composition writing was very high. Writing weaknesses appeared not only in the composition class but also in expository writing assigned in other disciplines such as psychology, biology, and the social sciences. It appeared that some students placed little store in the whole of composition writing. They often grasped a single principle and turned in a composition founded on hope and vagueness. They were not unlike the five blind men who stood in front of the elephant and, grasping a single part such as the leg, called it a tree. Most bewildering was this atmosphere of continuous error that prevailed, and yet from the mill, the would-be writers came and went and wrote in the lenience of their spheres of knowledge.

The Research Problem

In order to accomplish the purpose of the study, the focus of this research involved the following:

1. A delineation of writing problems of first-year college students in English as perceived by English instructors in responding colleges and universities located in the southeastern, central, western and northeastern regions of the United States
2. An analysis of the writing problems through examination of actual work of students
3. An analysis of student opinions with regard to their writing inadequacies

Since words can be tools for all that is constructive in our society as well as weapons for that which is destructive, it matters that students be led to discover the importance of language. In that all human beings, whether they verbalize it nor not, want to be loved, want someone to care, and desire approval, it is significant that students know, as indicated by Dr. Raymond Gibson,[1] that communication skill has a great deal to do with their relationship with people; that they be made aware of the relevance of their language; that they be led to know that liberty, which is prized by all humankind, is derived from a command of language.

It matters that students learn the correct way to use language, for the very heart of their education is in its usage. Language, they should be led to believe, can increase, positively, their spheres of knowledge.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out how widespread was this syndrome of writing inadequacy among students in first-year college and university composition classes as delineated in the sample, to identify and categorize the writing errors, to find out what instructors of English as well as students felt about first-year composition inadequacies.

It was anticipated that this study would have the following outcomes:

1. It would obtain, on a regional basis, an inventory of grammar and composition competencies of students in responding colleges and universities as instructors see these errors

2. It would reveal, on a regional basis, actual

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[1] Interview with Dr. Raymond Gibson, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, July 1976.

student competencies with essay writing principles and grammar through diagnostic tests

3. It would reveal whether or not open or restrictive admissions standards have any effect on student competency in writing

4. It would provide a profile of composition errors which could later lead to a productive methodological approach to minimize the errors

Hypotheses

The hypothesis for this study stated that compositions written by first-year college students tended to be deficient in quality and that a critical examination of select aspects of student compositions and an analysis of instructors' opinions could lead to an understanding of aspects of the weaknesses. The correction of such weaknesses might logically follow such findings. The following are hypotheses for the study:

1. There was a high level of agreement among instructors of English regarding writing problems of first-year students

2. The range of error types among institutions and regions in composition, knowledge of writing principles and grammar would be extensive

3. Student responses to the identification of and cause for their writing inadequacies would reveal that which may be called the "bare-bones reality" of their writing problems

4. A profile of composition and grammar errors would be obtained

5. Instructor responses would reveal a heavy trend toward assignments involving critical analyses of literary works

Significance of the Problem

It was hoped that this study would prove significant to the English program and professionals in the field. Educational theory and practice could be influenced by the study in that there would be provided an extension of awareness of writing errors as seen by instructors and made by students. Further, it was hoped that the investigation could be a catalyst for constructive action on the part of all who came into contact with composition courses. For instructors, not working in the English discipline, the study may reveal that much is to be gained by them and their students in that there was active concern and recognition of writing problems by instructors throughout the nation.

This study sought to define and extend existing knowledge of writing problems and to offer writing error causal factors as perceived by student writers. It was hoped that this analysis would be useful in establishing requirements for English curricula throughout the nation.

Discussions about the inability of students to write are extensive, and many are seemingly mesmerized into inactivity by the writing syndrome.

There was logical need for reawakening instructor consciousness that there are grave implications in superficial, haphazard instruction in grammar or writing principles.

In the hands of professionals, this study could be a guide, a gentle prodder, a reminder; hopefully, this study will sound a clarion call for action as opposed to endless rhetoric about writing errors of college students.

Methodology

This study used as a sample the following:

1. A quasi-stratified sample of instructors:

    a. Some were selected on the basis of personal acquaintance

    b. Some were randomly selected on the basis of academic reputation of the institution

These instructors taught first-year composition in the community colleges and universities and are delineated in the limitations of the study.

2. A sample of students who attended the community colleges and university first-year composition classes as delineated in the limitation of the study and who were administered the tests by the quasi-stratified sample of instructors

The geographic regions were those as defined by the Office of Business Economics, Department of Commerce:[2]

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[2] U.S., Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Assessment of Educational Progress, General Information Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 40.

Southeast	Central	West	Northeast
Arkansas	Iowa	Alaska	Delaware
Florida	Kansas	Hawaii	Connecticut
Virginia	Nebraska	Idaho	Maine
West Virginia	North Dakota	Montana	New Hampshire
Alabama	South Dakota	Nevada	Rhode Island
Georgia	Minnesota	Wyoming	Vermont
Kentucky	Missouri	Arizona	District of Columbia
Louisiana	Illinois	Oregon	Maryland
Mississippi	Indiana	Utah	Massachusetts
North Carolina	Michigan	Colorado	New Jersey
South Carolina	Wisconsin	New Mexico	Pennsylvania
Tennessee	Ohio	Oklahoma	New York
		California	
		Texas	
		Washington	

Representative participation was sought by a significant number of first-year college composition instructors and students from these regions throughout the United States; thus survey sheets were sent to ten instructors at each of fourteen institutions for their responses, and enough surveys were sent to get responses from one or more classes per instructor at each institution.

The Instructor Survey (IS) was designed to obtain an assessment of student writing competencies by instructors (Appendix A). The National Student Survey (NSS) was used to measure student competency with general essay principles (Appendix B). The Grammar Diagnostic (GD) tested specific areas of grammar determined by past teaching experience to be troublesome for students (Appendix C). The Composition Diagnostic (CD) tested student response to a given essay problem (Appendix D).

The descriptive research study involved a comparison of regional performance in Grammar, composition, and knowledge of essay principles by first-year composition students and a description of differences in performance by these students classified by ability in English as remedial or regular and also an instructor assessment of student errors.

Assumptions and Methodological Weaknesses

Assumptions

In that the study involved professionally trained personnel who were functioning in a college or university setting, the following assumptions were made:

1. Teachers of first-year composition classes would be willing to share student writing problems because such sharing promises to improve their own effectiveness in achieving expected outcomes

2. Because instructors in a college setting are professionally trained persons, they would be expected to respond objectively to the survey

3. Composition instructors would find the results useful to the point of modifying teaching methods and stressing those categories revealed as needing emphasis

Methodological Weaknesses

There were certain methodological weakness which could have influenced the success of this analysis:

1. Some students might have been predisposed to avoidance practice and might not have responded to surveys adequately.

2. There was a built-in bias in the study because of

differences in admission requirements for students who chose to attend universities with more restrictive admission requirements

3. Faculty and students generally had a full schedule of activities, and the added task of questionnaire completion could have affected the less than 100 percent return

4. Individual differences of students undoubtedly affected performance

5. There was not an equal number of responses from all institutions or regions; thus one must, to an extent, rely upon generalizations

6. There was not objective criteria for the selection of the sample

7. There were problems inherent in statistics which affected the conclusions

8. There was no pilot study in the strictest sense to help determine reliability and validity of self-constructed instruments

Limitations of the Study

The investigation of the writing syndrome, Phase I, using the National Student Survey and Instructor Questionnaire was limited to 231 first-year English composition students (remedial and regular) and to thirty instructors of these students. Eight institutions responded from the central, western, southeastern and northeastern parts of the U.S. (see Table 6).

Phase II involved a grammar diagnostic and a composition diagnostic with 505 total student responses from the southeastern, northeastern, central and western parts of the nation. Sixteen of this number (a remedial class) responded to the grammar section only; nineteen of the number responded to the essay writing problem but no names were given on the sheets for a successful pairing with the grammar diagnostic (see Table 7).

Scoring

First semester college students enrolled in regular and remedial English classes were chosen as subjects for the study. Instructors were asked to give tests at the beginning of the course to obtain that which might be termed raw reliability status (an incoming freshman score without benefit of college instruction). Institutions involved in the study were selected on the basis of academic reputation, academic association. The writer's institution was also involved (see Tables 6 and 7).

There was not a problem of subjectivity in scoring the diagnostic essays because there were pre-set standards as to that which constitutes an error in agreement or other errors in mechanics.

Survey Returns

Surveys for the study were sent out in two phases. Phase I (September 1975 to June 1976) involved sending instructor questionnaires and the National Student Survey to a combined total of eight colleges and universities and to two community colleges. There was a ninety-five percent return of surveys for Phase I. Phase II surveys were sent out the middle of August 1976 to the same institutions as in Phase I with the addition of four community colleges in an effort to obtain a better response balance between two-year colleges and four-year institutions. On these there was a forty-five percent return of surveys which tested grammar and composition competency.

State-of-the-Art in Statistics and Research

Research statistical tools did not prove very effective for analyzing the diagnosed problems related to composition and grammar because they relied on dealing with quantitative data. Typically, compositions and grammar letter grades had to be converted to numerical scales. Individual differences made up part of the difficulty in measuring performance, for behind each student was the nebulous environmental factor which could not be measured as an influence upon performance.

Complete objectivity, the goal for which many instructors strove, was unattainable, for as one graded any composition paper, the influence of the instructor's environment, value system, goal attainment desire affected the grade placed upon the student composition. Variation in the assigning of grades to papers remained a problem.

Much of the research in this area has relied on statistics in the behavioral science area, and it was obvious that new and improved statistical research techniques were needed.

Definition of Terms

1. Composition Diagnostic (CD): for the purposes of this study, the composition assignment diagnosis of student errors was Marie Leiderman's topic--"You will be reborn tomorrow morning. You may come back as anything you choose except yourself. What would you like to come back as? Why?

2. Comprehensive: taking into account all writing error causal factors and providing a solution therefor

3. First-year student: the student who was having his or her first year of class instruction in English at any college or university

4. GPA: grade-point average (the average of grades acquired by a student over a given period of time for any given number of subjects)

5. Grammar Diagnostic (GD): a diagnostic, testing parts of speech, spelling, pronouns, subjects, verbs, modifiers, agreement and verb forms

6. Instructor Survey (IS): survey sent to all instructors of institutions designated in Limitations of the Study as a means of getting their opinions with regard to the students' general writing readiness, writing weaknesses and types of writing assignments given

7. National Student Survey (NSS): the survey devised by the writer and sent to students, testing knowledge of the principles of composition writing and assessing the human element

8. Prescriptive: a body of specifics and specially developed material aimed at eliminating writing problems

9. Regular (English I): those students who made scores of fifty and above on the GM Test; nineteen and above on the ACT Test; 450 and above on the SAT Test, thus qualifying students at San Diego City College for regular composition classes. At other colleges and universities this generally referred to those who passed with satisfactory scores the College Entrance Examination

10. Remedial: referred to those students who made scores of 34-49 on the GM Test (Galas Maes, San Diego City College Placement Test), scored 11-18 on the ACT Test (American College Test) and scores of 250-449 on the SAT test (Scholastic Aptitude Test) at the San Diego City College; at other colleges and universities, this referred to those who did not make satisfactory scores on the College Entrance Examination

11. Value Stress: the placing of emphasis on a commitment to caring, compassion, and mercy rather than on a high grade-point average or on material gain that could be derived from getting a college degree

Organization of the Study

Chapter I presents the Introduction; Chapter II presents the Review of Literature; Chapter III provides Population, Instruments, Procedure, Instructions and Scoring; Chapter IV presents the Findings; and Chapter V presents the Conclusions and Recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An extensive review of literature pertaining to an analysis of composition errors made by first-year college students revealed that the subject had not been under investigation to the extent that a comprehensive assessment had been made by many individual writers. The annual study under the name of the National Assessment of Education Progress was the investigation most closely associated with this study. Studies which have been undertaken in the past have dealt primarily with small populations in a small regional area, thereby limiting their applicability to the scope of the present investigation. Most of the works reviewed tended to be prescriptive with little or no indication that the experiments were first based on an assessment of considerable magnitude. All works, however, significantly dealt with the morass which surrounded educators as they viewed the writing of college students.

Problem Recognition and Assessment

With regard to recognition and assessment of the writing syndrome, in Validity Errors in Expository Compositions of College Freshmen, Sanderson investigated five types of validity errors in expository compositions and related to these that which he calls the incidence of consciousness of projection and multi-valued orientation.[3] His hypothesis was that students would vary considerably in the number and kinds of validity errors and certain students were predicted to have fewer errors. Fifty students from a freshman college class declared to be the well-adjusted, the more intelligent, the better critical thinkers, those most capable of distinguishing between facts and inference were involved in the study. He obtained results indicating that students make a great number of validity errors with a range of 13 to 82 with a mean of 42.6. As Sanderson used a five percent level of confidence for the test of significance, he did not find a measurable difference between each kind of the five kinds of validity errors and degree of personal adjustment, ability to think critically, general intelligence and ability to distinguish facts from inferences.

Similarities exist between Sanderson's study and the writer's investigation in that errors were sought out and were categorized, but his study selected only those classified as the more intelligent whereas the present study crossed the strata of student capability, for example, at San Diego City College, those not passing the GM Test (34-49) along with those who passed (GM 50 and above) and were classified and eligible for English I. Sanderson ventured predictions about errors as did the investigator of this study and involved in Sanderson's study was a freshman class as in the writer's study.

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[3] Richard Edward Sanderson, "Validity Errors in Expository Compositions of College Freshmen," Dissertation Abstract International, Vol. 25/02 (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1963), p. 1200.

The major thrust of a study called A Stylistic Mechanistic Analysis of Student Compositions by Salerno revealed that a fairly accurate writing profile for a designated ability group, based upon the composition characteristics of those within that group could be objectively determined.[4] The group tested was a twelfth grade class of a large urban school. Salerno's work had a definite bearing on the writer's study in that both studies delved into problems characteristic of prose written by students and set forth for examination errors made in mechanics, the knowledge of which would be quite useful to an English instructor. His experiment revealed that there were weaknesses in student writing that are similar to errors made by students involved in this investigation. Those mechanical errors were as follows: (1) weak transition, (2) punctuation errors, (3) errors in diction, and (4) spelling. Whereas these errors were presented and stylistic analyses given, Salerno's work differs markedly from this study in that his investigation involved a twelfth grade class. The only area that Salerno tested was urban, whereas the study by this writer tested precisely those students from urban as well as suburban areas who had made the college matriculation decision by enrolling, perhaps thus involving more student mental commitment and thought to the task of responding to a survey.

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[4] Patrick John Salerno, "A Stylistic-Mechanistic Analysis of Student Compositions," Dissertation Abstract International Vol. 31/08A (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1962), p. 4145.

Providing material of significance related to the present study but not sufficient to invalidate the writer's investigation is Yesner's study "Let's Not Return to Basis Skills."[5] In that the writer's study revealed that instructors are aware of lack of student competency with basic skills, and in that English conferences deal with the subject of basic skills, the portion of the article that gives Yesner's definition of basic skills is pertinent. Yesner terms anything a basic skill as long as it is supporting some other skill. He speaks of the things that he had heard referred to as failures in basic skills, such as students who can't spell, punctuate, identify parts of speech, capitalize, detect ideas and facts, do grammar, grasp syntactical order, induce, deduce, or interpret. He speaks of alleged basic skills, such as aptitudes akin to thinking, skills that stand alone, social manifestations of language environment. In a further effort to define basic skills, Yesner indicated that general skills involved the activities of reading, writing, speaking and listening. He felt that basic skills are those functions which aid in the performance of general skills.

Yesner's study was geared to problems confronting those in senior high school; therefore, it had its limitations insofar as depth and extent of the problem for college were concerned. Yet it had relation to the present study in that there was a specific effort to identify the problem with writing that students were having, and there was further effort to clarify the basic skills of which many grammarians speak.

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[5] Seymour Yesner, "Let's Not Return to Basic Skills," English Journal 62, (September 1973):892-895.

Mellon in "Round Two of the National Writing Assessment--Interpreting the Apparent Decline of Writing Ability: A Review,"[6] indicated that the writing of thirteen and seventeen-year olds in 1974 was poorer in overall quality than the writing of 1969 student writers. In that Mellon's article was an evaluation of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, it stands to reason that his remarks have a relationship to the present study in that the writer's concern is an assessment of writing. Of significance was Mellon's comment that the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) booklet, besides presenting strictly factual information, goes into interpretation, for the investigator's study presents an interpretation of student and instructor responses from the standpoint of human implications which the investigator felt was a factor for consideration that is often overlooked. Mellon emphatically stated that there is no other educational research project that can match the NAEP for sample representativeness. Mellon felt that the NAEP assessment was inadequate because it represented a single theme written by each age group averaging fifty words long at age nine and one hundred thirty-seven words at ages thirteen and seventeen. Additionally he felt that fifty years of research have indicated that writing samples of 800 to 1000 words per person from at least four to five different essays were required to achieve intra-subject consistency to be representative of a per person basis. Mentioned was the idea that reasoning dictates that across-time comparisons should be reported on several essays rather than one if valid inferences were to be drawn. NAEP had many essays to take care of the across-time requirement but had no funds to score and analyze them.

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[6] John C. Mellon, "Round Two of the National Writing Assessment--Interpreting the Apparent Decline of Writing Ability: A Review," Research in the Teaching of English 10 (Spring 1976):67-74.

As in the writer's study, the topic for the writing sample was the kind which made direct appeal to student feelings, thus evoking a more genuine response than a more sophisticated topic. The topic, according to Mellon, involved the student in describing something that he had seen in such a way that it could be recognized by someone reading the description. It appeared in this case, the writer felt, that there was in operation the basic riddle theme in which the student cited several specific characteristics of an item and then provided the reader with a brief identity line which revealed the item or asked the reader to guess what was being described.

Mellon said that the rating and counting in the last assessment were performed by trained English teachers who were unaware whether an essay was written in 1969 or in 1974. Judgment of coherence and awkwardness were made on a yes/no, incidence/non-incidence basis--yes, this paragraph is coherent; no this paragraph is not coherent--just as were the error and structure counts. Raters were shown sample papers typifying each quality level and then read 1969 and 1974 papers from a given age randomly mixed but identified as to time of writing. The Writing Assessment provided error counts on run-on sentences, sentence fragments, misspelled words, wrongly chosen words; a view of percent per total elaborated sentences, awkward sentences, coherent paragraphs, paragraph, essay sentence and word length. There was similarity between items tested by the Writing Assessment and by the writer.

Mellon agreed with Professors Jones and Winterowd that no evidence indicated that instructors need to go back to the basics but felt that much depended upon one's understanding of the term "basics." This concern with "basics" was voiced by Yesner in "Let's Not Return to Basic Skills,"[7] which was referred to in this study.

The Cornell University Chronicle in a recent article entitled "Quality of Cornell Students Assessed"[8] revealed that although SAT scores are dropping nationally, the scores of Cornell entering classes have been the same over the past five years with an increase in math scores. The average verbal scores dropped twelve points from 601 in 1972 to 589 this year (1976). Over the same period, the national average in verbal scores dropped twenty-four points, from 455 to 431. The article offered for comparison the figures in 1972 with those of now:

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[7] Yesner, "Basic Skills," pp. 613-614.

[8] "Quality of Cornell Students Assessed." Cornell University Chronicle (23 September 1976):1.

> In 1972, for example, 5.1 percent of the students nationwide who scored 600 or more in the verbal SAT applied to Cornell. This year the percentage was 6.2. However, the increased share is from a drastically reduced national pool. In 1972 there were 116,630 students in the nation who scored above 600 in their verbal SAT. This year the figure was 82,000. Thus Cornell is more than holding its own in the proportion of high ability students as measured by the V-Sat but has had a moderate decline in absolute number of these students. . . .[9]

Related to the writer's study is Recommendation V which appears in Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations/Final Report of the Joint Committee on Educational Goals and Evaluation to the Legislature, State Board of Education, California, under the title of Bringing Education to the People, July 1975.[10] Suggested in the report was a modification of the state assessment which would have assessments include institutional factors, such as the school climate, learning environment, and utilization of resources. The report further suggested that the assessment should generate a profile of educational progress as a whole, regionally, and by general characteristics, but without reference to individual schools and districts unless requested by local governing boards on an individual basis. Impressive was the idea that assessments should be referenced and reported in terms of objectives, rather than norms with general groups as opposed to individual pupils, schools, and districts. Some test results in the writer's study were reported by region as a reflection of writing tendencies as well as individual tendencies where obtainable.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] California, State Legislature, "Bringing Education to the People," Final Report of the Joint Committee on Educational Goals and Evaluation (Sacramento, CA, July 1975), p.2.

Golladay compiled in the March 1976 edition of The Condition of Education a statistical report on the condition of education in the United States for the National Center for Education.[11] One phase of the report reflected the writing performance of nine-, thirteen-, and seventeen-year-olds between the years of 1970 and 1974 as reflected in Figures 1 and 2.[12]

Commenting in the discussion section leading to the achievement reflected in the chart by the National Center for Education, Golladay expressed the prevailing uncertainty about the learning that large increases in formal awards and graduations were supposed to reflect. It was questioned whether or not recent graduates knew more or less than their counterparts receiving awards in prior years.

Performance among older age groups was shown as

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[11] U.S., Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Educational Statistics, "The Condition of Education," by May A. Golladay (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, March 1976), pp. 43,45.

[12] Ibid.

Writing performance increased for 9-year-olds but decreased for 17-year olds between the years 1970 and 1974.

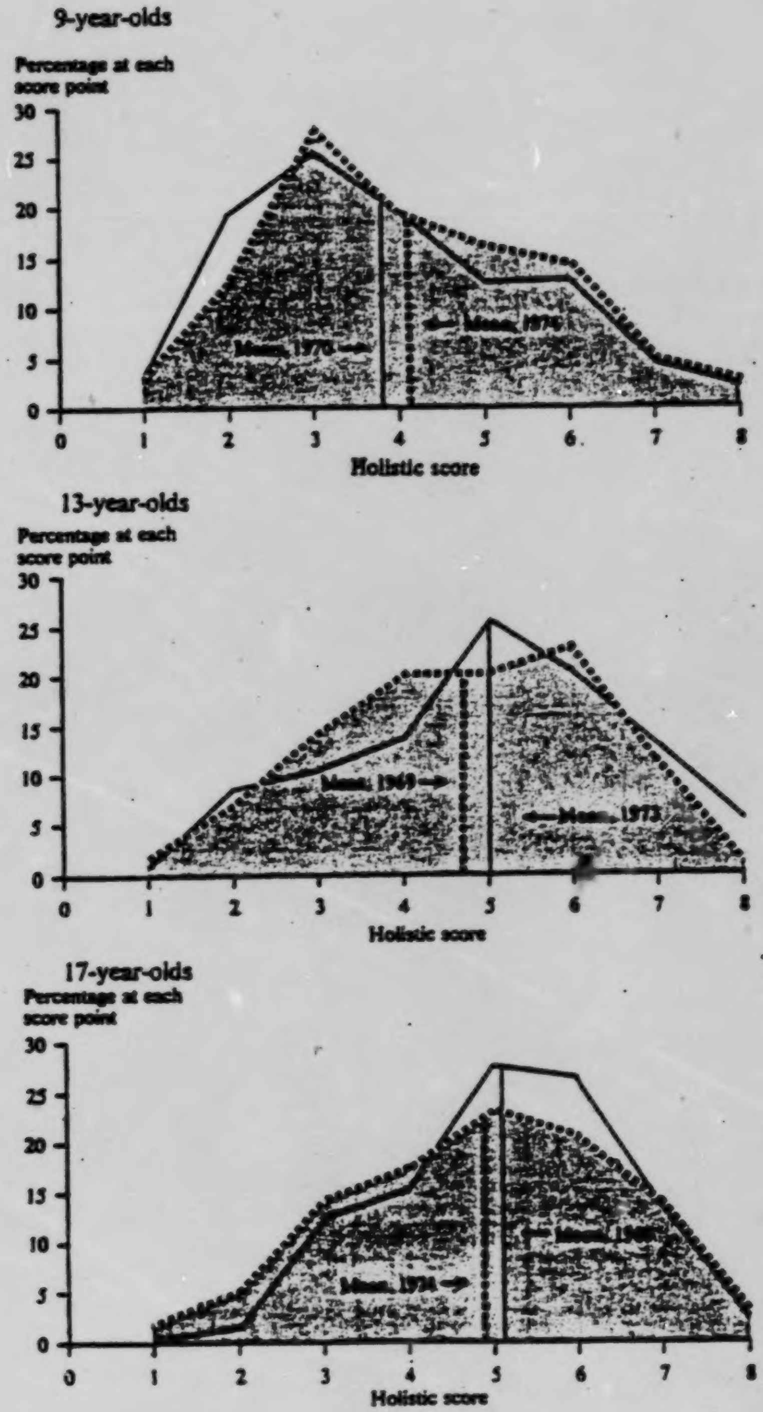

Figure 1. Writing Performance

Males perform better than females in mathematics, science, social studies and citizenship, at all age levels.

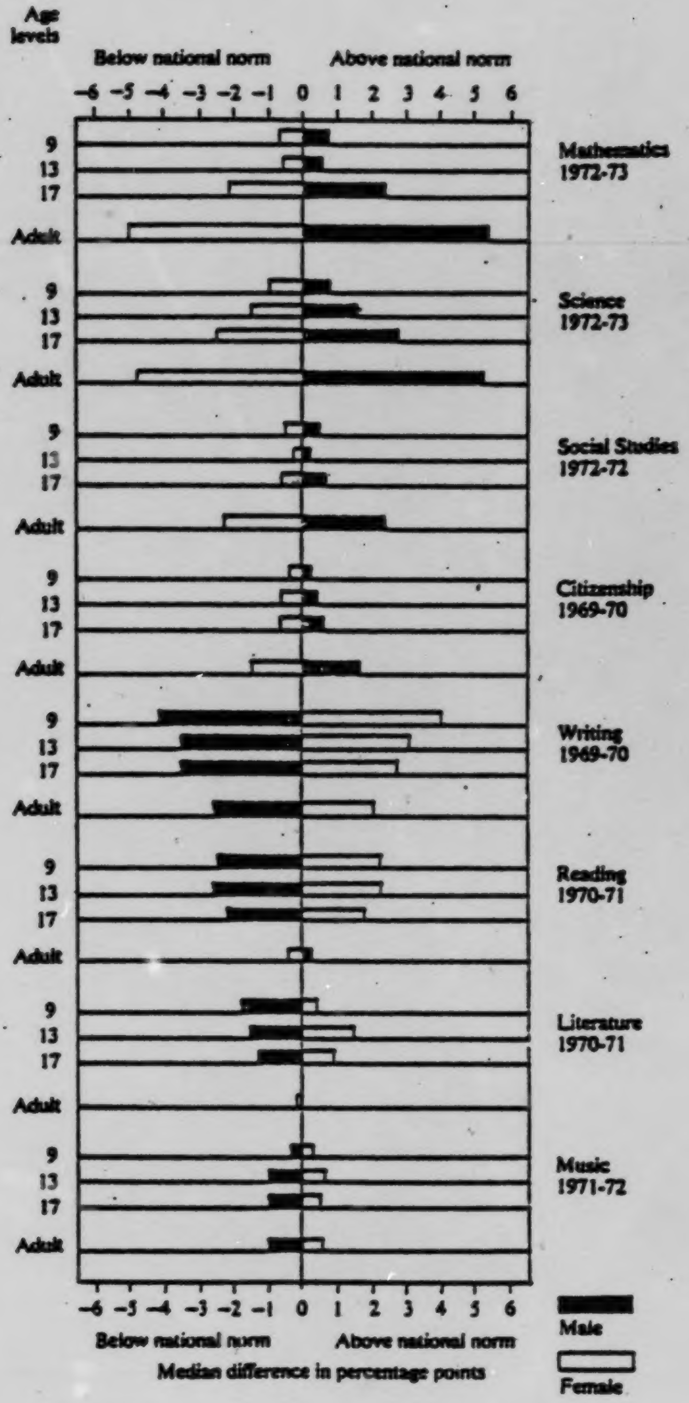

Figure 2. Achievement in Subject Areas

improving, but the members of the National Center indicated that the level was disconcerting.

Holistic scoring was used in the writer's evaluation of essays returned on Leiderman's essay topic in the assessment of writing tendencies of college freshmen, and this same scoring approach was used in achieving results in writing by the National Center. The valuable specific categories of writing difficulty are not pointed out in the study of The Condition of Education as they are in the writer's study. A great deal of time can be saved in the classroom when specific areas of weakness are known in advance by instructors as a result of assessed error tendencies. It may well be that items usually taken to give the diagnostic can be used for beginning instruction as soon as students enter a class in English composition.

A national assessment of educational progress from 1969 to 1974 appears in a bulletin called Writing Mechanics and is quite comprehensive in nature. An abstract of the results for the seventeen-year olds follows (see Table 1):

> 1. There was an overall decline in the quality of the essays written for the second assessment; the mean holistic score dropped from 5.12 in 1969 to 4.85 in 1974, and the percentage of 17-year olds writing papers ranked four or better declined from 85 percent to 78 percent.
> 2. Increases in awkwardness, run-on sentences and incoherent paragraphs most likely reduced the overall quality of the essays. Reduced coherence implies a diminishing of traditional organizational and transitional skills; awkwardness and the increase in run-ons suggest uneasiness with the conventions of written language. All of these changes point to a movement away from established writing conventions toward those of spoken discourse. More 17-year olds may be writing as they speak.
> 3. In general, most of those aspects of wrting generally called "mechanics" and stressed heavily in elementary

TABLE 1

AVERAGE ESSAY WRITTEN BY 17-YEAR OLDS, COUNTS

	1969	1974	Change
Average holistic score	5.1	4.9	-0.2*
Average number of words/essay	137.1	137.1	0.1
Average number of sentences/essay	9.1	9.4	0.3
Average number of paragraphs/essay	1.9	1.8	-0.1
Average number of punctuation marks	15.3	16.0	0.7
Average number of letters/word	4.2	4.1	-0.1*
Average number of words/sentence	16.5	15.9	-0.6
Average number of words/paragraph	93.3	97.3	4.0
Average number of sentences/paragraph	6.1	6.7	0.6

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1969-1974: A Capsule Description of Changes in Writing Mechanics," 05 W-01 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 1975), p. 7.

*Differences that are statistically significant are indicated by asterisks.

and junior high school English classes (e.g., punctuation, capitalization, agreement, spelling, word usage and so on) are being handled adequately by the vast majority of students, and there is no evidence of deterioration in their use.

4. Good writers are as good as they were; i.e., have the same mean holistic score--and there may be a few more of them than there were in 1969.
5. Good writers are writing longer essays without losing coherence or increasing their error rates in such areas as punctuation, word choice, spelling, run-ons, fragments and so on.
6. Good essays contain about the same mixture of simple, compound and complex sentences and about the same proportion of sentences with phrases; they continue to contain only one spelling error in every 100 words.
7. Poor writers are worse than they were; i.e., have a lower mean holistic score--and there are more of them than there were in 1969.
8. Poor writers are writing shorter, less stylistically sophisticated essays but retaining about the same error rates--in effect, increasing their proportion of errors.
9. More poor essays are incoherent than were in 1969.
10. Poor writers are getting poorer, then, in those skills that are specific to written communication but seldom called for in conversation; that are acquired largely through broad reading and considerable rewriting; that are most seldom taught and, when taught, are most difficult to teach, especially to poor readers and people who have little use for printed communication.[13]

This assessment closely paralleled the writer's study, for it presented tested results in specific writing categories, such as run-ons, fragments, misspelled words, wrong words, awkward sentences. Not covered as they were in the writer's study with single category emphasis were errors in agreement, verb form, modifiers, parts of speech and functioning subjects. The detailed scope of the writer's study provided an assessment of true basics as well as application of these grammatical principles.

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[13] U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1969-1974: A Capsule Description of Changes in Writing Mechanics," 05 W-01 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 1975), p. 1.

Characteristics of the avereage paper written by seventeen-year old students in 1974 were revealed in Writing Mechanics. The papers were 137 words long with nine sentences averaging sixteen words, organized in two coherent but not well-developed paragraphs. Half the sentences used were simple in structure and three-fourths of these were said to include phrases. One-third of the sentences were complex, containing phrases. Six percent of the sentences were compound.[14] Another table in the assessment[15] revealed that forty-eight percent of the sentences in the average essay would be simple in structure, 31 percent would be complex, 10 percent would be run-ons, 6 percent would be compound sentences and 5 percent would be sentence fragments (see Table 2).

The assessment revealed significant changes in the average paper between 1969 and 1974. The papers were lower in quality in 1974 with the mean holistic score dropping .25 score points. The vocabulary became simpler; there was a smaller proportion of complex sentences with phrases and a higher proportion of run-on sentences (see Figure 3).[16]

This assessment indicated that seventeen-year olds may not see any advantage in being good writers because the culture is less print-oriented, and they don't feel moved to master any skill which may not be used after school is over.

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[14] Ibid., p. 7. [15] Ibid., p. 8. [16] Ibid., p. 9.

TABLE 2

AVERAGE ESSAY WRITTEN BY 17-YEAR OLDS, SENTENCES

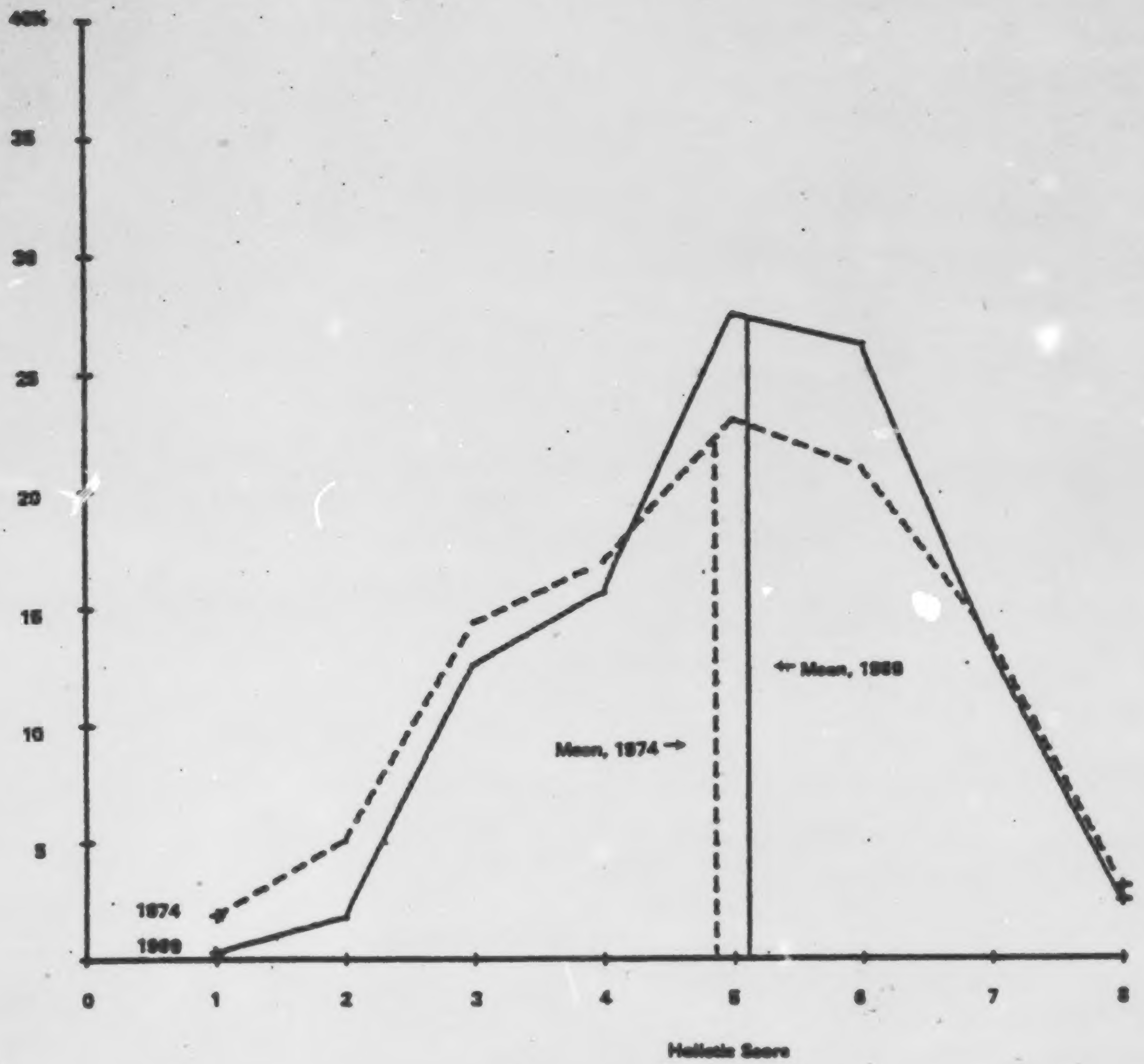
	1969		1974		Change	
	Av. No.	Av. %	Av. No.	Av. %	Av. No.	Av. %
Simple sentences	4.6	49%	4.9	48%	0.3	-1%
Compound sentences	0.5	5	0.5	6	+ **	1
Complex sentences	3.1	35	3.0	31	-0.1	-4
Run-ons	0.4	7	0.6	10	0.2*	3*
Fragments (incorrect)	0.4	4	0.4	5	0.0	1
Sentences with phrases	6.9*	76	6.8	70	-0.1	-6*
Simple sentences with phrases	3.7	40	3.9	38	0.2	-2
Complex sentences with phrases	2.8	31	2.5	26	-0.3	-5*
Awkward sentences	1.3	16	1.4	18	0.1	2

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1969-1974: A Capsule Description of Changes in Writing Mechanics," 05 W-01 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 1975), p. 8.

*Differences that are statistically significant are indicated by asterisks.

**Plus sign equals rounded number less than 0.05.

Percentages of 17-Year-Olds at Each Holistic Score Point, 1969 and 1974



SOURCE: U.S., Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1969-1974: A Capsule Description of Changes in Writing Mechanics," 05 W-01 (Washington, D.C.: Goverment Printing Office, October 1975), p. 9.

Figure 3. Percentages of 17-Year-Olds at Each Holistic Score Point, 1969 and 1974.

The group doing the report found it difficult to interpret the drop in coherence in papers. Research, the report reflected, showed that there was a big gap between texts about writing and the kind of writing done by professionals. This was a significant point, and the investigator felt that it warranted further study with regard to peer writing models. The report further reflected that seventeen-year olds might respond with more entusiasm to a different essay task. This thought, which was shared by the writer, prompted the choice of Leiderman's topic for the diagnostic study. Such a topic as Leiderman's can evoke the most elemental responses (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

COHERENT PARAGRAPHS
AGE 17

	1969		1974	
	Average Number	Average Percent	Average Number	Average Percent
National	1.5	85%	1.3*	76%
Male	1.4	87	1.2*	75*
Female	1.6	84	1.3*	78
Low quality	1.0	83	0.6*	56*
High quality	1.7	87	1.8	86

*Difference from 1969 is statistically significant.

Flanagan for the American Insitutes for Research in Palo Alto reported on results from two studies comparing small samples from 1970 and 1975 with Project Talent samples in 1960.[17] The same instruments were used for the comparison in the Institute's study.

Flanagan reported that twenty percent of 1,000 schools that were in Project Talent's March 1960 study were asked to have their eleventh grade students give one hour's time to the study. This resulted in 13,000 students who took the Project Talent Reading Comprehension Test, March 1970, answering the same questions the students answered ten years earlier.

A summary of the results revealed a slight gain in reading comprehension during the period, this being "0.5 raw score points (on a forty-eight item test) for the male eleventh grade group and 0.3 raw score points for the females."[18] Revealed also was the fact that between 1970 and 1975 the performance on all language tests dropped significantly. It was said that the greatest drops were in vocabulary, and English reading comprehension mean scores dropped a half a point.

Fifteen years's experience with the battery of tests in English and computation showed a simple, straightforward type of learning according to the report.[19] Two tests showed the conscientiousness of the students in their study time which had been reduced during fifteen years. There was a decline in vocabulary which, to the study group, indicated less reading in and out of school. There were increases in abstract reasoning and creativity.

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[17] John C. Flanagan, "Changes in School Levels of Achievement: Project Talent Ten and Fifteen Year Retests," Educational Researcher 5 (1976):9-11.

[18] Ibid., p. 9.

[19] Ibid., p. 11.

Suggested in conclusion is the idea that it is necessary to study trends in all abilities being developed by the present generation and relate these to all their education experiences. Flanagan indicated that the National Assessment of Educational Progress doesn't tell what caused the changes in trends of educational outcomes. Needed, he said, was formulation and testing of specific hypotheses as to why the changes are taking place. Questioned was what are people reading; how much has television reduced reading time; what were students doing instead of learning the rule of punctuation, capitalization and language usage; were the newer courses adding knowledge or consuming study time that would otherwise be placed on basic skills. Perhaps the human element in student responses will provide an answer as to why certain changes are taking place in trends of educational outcomes. Flanagan ended the report by saying that intensive studies of individuals on a longitudinal basis were needed to relate student performance change to specific student experiences to ensure progress in education.

Tables 4 and 5 from Flanagan's study reflect results of his tests.

Reflections and Observations

Worthy of consideration were reflections and observations

TABLE 4

COMPARISONS OF 1960 AND 1975 RESULTS

	Males ($(N^{1975}$=871)			Females N^{1975}=926)		
	Raw Score		Tenth Grade Percentile difference	Raw Score		Tenth Grade Percentile difference
	1960	1975		1960	1975	
Vocabulary	18.5	15.7	--17%	17.3	15.5	--11%
English	77.3	73.4	--12%	84.5	79.7	--16%
Reading Comprehension	28.8	28.4	-- 1%	29.8	29.1	-- 2%
Creativity	9.1	10.0	8%	8.4	10.1	16%
Mechanical Reasoning	12.4	12.2	-- 2%	8.5	9.2	7%
Visualization	8.9	8.8	-- 1%	7.8	8.1	4%
Abstract Reasoning	8.7	9.5	11%	8.7	9.4	8%
Quantitative Reasoning	8.5	7.8	-- 8%	8.0	7.2	-- 8%
Mathematics	10.5	10.7	2%	9.9	10.3	3%
Computation	25.7	18.7	--17%	30.8	26.9	--11%

SOURCE: John C. Flanagan, "Changes in School Levels of Achievement; Project Talent Ten and Fifteen Year Retests," Educational Researcher 5 (1976):9.

TABLE 5

ANALYSIS OF UNIQUE VARIANCE

Tenth Grade (N = 957)

	Error Variance $1-r_{i1}$	Multiple Correlation (9 tests) R_{ic}	Overlapping Variance $\frac{R^2_{ic}}{r_{cC}}$	Unique Variance $ri_1-\frac{R^2_{ic}}{r_{cC}}$	Potential Unique Validity* $(ri1-\frac{R^2_{ic})^{\frac{1}{2}}}{r_{cC}}$
Vocabulary	.07	.84	.75	.18	.42
English	.14	.75	.59	.27	.52
Reading Comprehension	.13	.84	.73	.14	.37
Creativity	.27	.73	.56	.17	.41
Mechanical Reasoning	.29	.71	.55	.16	.40
Visualization	.17	.69	.53	.30	.55
Abstract Reasoning	.23	.75	.60	.17	.41
Quantitative Reasoning	.25	.74	.57	.18	.42
Mathematics	.14	.80	.68	.18	.42
Computation	.17	.57	.38	.45	.67

SOURCE: John C. Flanagan, "Changes in School Levels of Achievement: Project Talent Ten and Fifteen Year Retests," Educational Researcher 5 (1976):11.

*Maximum possible validity coefficient of test with pure criterion measure of test's unique function.

made by persons concerned with the progress of English although these also did not necessarily involve actual assessments. An article condensed from Clearing House, 1973, entitled "English Teaching--Hoax of the Century" was valuable as related material. It also further confirmed the validity of the writer's study. Buckman, in the article with regard to the state of verbal communication, said:

> What concerns me most is the majority of graduates, the literates who go on to college to confound their professors with their cryptographic inscriptions in bluebooks, or who go to work in offices where they amaze their employers with their inability to write a simple declarative sentence.[20]

Widespread concern was further revealed by this study.

Perhaps looking into a crystal ball in 1964 and foreseeing the problems spoken of by Buckman in later years, Fisher wrote a paper called "Why Nobody Can't Write Good," which set forth the idea that blame for the writing syndrome should be placed on teacher preparation.[21] This is one of the contentions of the investigation which was later supported by the human element assessment. Buckman said of instruction:

> All teachers who refuse to grow up or are grossly underprepared to teach language pose a major threat to the entire system because they cannot distinguish between the important goals for their classes and the trivial. . . . Sensitivity sessions are fine but it is the intellectual and difficult disciplines like the study and practice of

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[20] Linda K. Buckman, "English Teaching--Hoax of the Century," Education Digest 39 (September 1973):42.

[21] John Fisher, "Why Nobody Can't Write Good," Harper's Magazine (February 1964), p. 16.

> writing which can equip students to do something other than drop out to weave baskets. . . .[22]

The most useful part of this statement emphasizes the disciplines involved in and necessary to writing. It is the disciplines in writing which are found lacking in writing by college students, thus prompting this investigation into specific areas of writing difficulty.

Also relating to the present study is the article by Slotnick on the National Assessment of Education Progress which does an annual assessment of writing skills at four levels: nine through twelve, seventeen, and twenty-six to thirty-five representative of young adults. Between the years 1969 and 1970, there were 88,000 respondents to three types of writing items: short answer, multiple choice, and original composition. The study revealed the following about the twenty-six to thirty-five group:

1. If young adults need to write less, maybe writing is emphasized too strongly in the high school. If adults communicate in other ways, maybe some time should be spent in speaking (how to observe visual media, how to get the salient points from a TV news program)

2. Writing could be a more captivating thing[23]

Almost in direct response to Slotnick is the idea of Maxwell who in "Closeup: The National Assessment of Writing Skills" indicated that it was quite wrong to make a suggestion that teachers should spend less time with composition merely because young adults suffer a loss in writing skills after they leave school.[24] It was his feeling that secondary school students should be brought to the highest level of skill possible, thus keeping the doors open for those for whom writing skills will be important. Here again there is very obviously an assessment which is the nature of the investigator's study.

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[22] Buckman, "Hoax," p. 44.

[23] John C. Maxwell and Henry B. Slotnick, "Close-up: The National Assessment of Writing Skills," English Journal 62 (December 1973):1248-1257.

Szilak, in an article called "Tricks," appearing in College English, felt that learning is to lead to independence, one aspect of this freedom coming about as submission to a discipline.[25] He felt that if a student attempts exposition which is burdened down with whimsical structures and diction, he will, in a sense, be violating the nature of his instrument and will produce non-systemic elements or noise. Taylor at the 1975 meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English spoke of noise in writing in a speech entitled "Eliminating Noise in Written Composition."[26] Both Taylor and Szilak felt that there is a sort of tyranny in this writing noise.

Szilak advanced the following ideas: that disciples are created by situational design which finally effaces the teacher, thus producing the liberation of the individual student. Bringing this about is the "trick" of which Szilak spoke.

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[24] Ibid., p. 1256.

[25] Dennis Szilak, "Tricks," College English 36 (September 1974-April 1975):517-539.

[26] Ann Taylor, "Eliminating Noise in Written Composition," a talk presented for the National Council of Teachers of English, San Diego, CA, November 1976.

> . . . It may be that the greatest threat to independent thinking lurks in those courses that put the most stress on it; and composition is surely one of them. To the extent that the teacher organizes and explicates ideas, he imposes upon the student certain points of view. To the extent that the student models his writing of his interpretations upon his teacher's presentations, he is a disciple of right thinking. . . . Thus, there arises the paradox--and an absurd solution. The teacher's duty is to free the student (make the student independent of the teacher's lines of thinking) but the teacher can only act on his duty by binding the student. . . .[27]

The solution, according to Szilak, was to get the students to pull their own rabbits out of their own hats. Types of assignments submitted through the Instructor Survey used by the writer will provide just the kind of writing climate to get students doing what Szilak discussed.

Taylor defined this "noise" as anything that interfered with the transmission of a message whereas Szilak did not extend a definition. In "Eliminating Noise in Written Composition," Taylor brought up a point that relates to this study, for the writer's efforts were, in part, to query English instructors to find out how they characterize the college writing problem. Taylor felt that the greatest obstacle which must be overcome is the presumption by English instructors that students must know everything about grammar before they begin to write. This is one of the reasons that the writer favors a learning package prepared for students at the beginning of a course and this package is dealt with in Recommendations. Whereas most instructors responding to questionnaires for this study lamented the failings of students and perhaps felt that a great deal of study is needed for the students to get ready to write, Taylor felt that intensified study of grammar is not necessarily of significant value. Her theory involved the use of some of the principles of public speaking to teach writing. It was her observation that her students who took the speech course with her as well as a composition course turned out better compositions. For example, if her students were assigned a paper involving persuasion, they were instructed to include an attention step, a need step (the problem), a satisfaction step (the solution), a step to intensify desire, a result step (an indication of success if recommendation is used or not used), and a request approval step. After an overview of the course was given, Taylor spent a great deal of time on communication needs, involving words like "sender" and "receiver." She gave as examples of mechanical noise, poor penmanship, smudges on a page, and a ragged sheet ripped from a composition book. She indicated that another kind of noise, referred to as semantic, occurred in the mind. Both kinds of noise, she felt, prevent achievement in writing. Stressed also in her course are psychological overtones of words, accuracy of message sending.

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[27] Szilak, "Tricks," p. 517.

Taylor's plan for learning, which also involved keeping a separate sheet of grammatical errors with error circled and described as well as a statement of how to correct it for each student, is quite time-consuming and would provide difficulty for those instructors who are not knowledgeable with regard to the application of speech techniques.

Hensley stated in "Formal Composition,"

> Like poor Jared, I am tired of the Tower of Babel syndrome I am living in: no one reads, no one writes correctly, only a handful speak correctly, and even fewer have enough intelligence to recognize their lack of it.[28]

Hensley continued by saying that his experience in grading college themes had led him to admit that college people write exactly the way they talk, and that is described by Hensley as being fantastically incorrect. He said,

> By virtue of that fact, I ask you if Orwell was that far off when he predicted a take-over by 1984. The very next generation of Russians could easily establish a Newspeak, in English, for our next generation.

Significant was Hensley's reflection that now coming back to haunt us is the "substitution of pseudo-humanities programs in our high schools, which offer credit for anything from 'Telephone Manners' to the 'Comic Book as Art,' in place of core courses in composition and literary analysis."[29] There is a great deal of argument about courses like these which are referred to by many people as frills.

Advanced as ideas which reinforce the importance of language as indicated by the investigation in the research project description are Hensley's four points of justification for the study of composition during the late twentieth century:

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[28] Dennis E. Hensley, "Formal Composition," Missouri English Bulletin 34 (January 1976):1-3.

[29] Ibid., p. 1.

> 1. We study composition to become literate individuals of the highest order, for history has proven that only literate civilizations succeed and flourish.
> 2. Man studies composition not only as a means by which to communicate with the outside world, but also as a means of communicating with his own inner world.
> 3. Skilled writers may consider themselves vocationally trained.
> 4. A person with a writing aptitude is one who is better equipped to handle both business and social obligations.[30]

An answer which will prove helpful to instructors and which will provide motivation for improving writing skills is cited by Hensley as he indicated that the 1974 Writers' Digest listed seventy top-paying jobs for writers such as reviewers, script writers, advertising experts, travel brochure designers, business systems analysts, poll takers, newspaper writers, reporters, speech writers and magazine editors.

Prescriptive Studies

Needed are those studies which are prescriptive in nature. These cannot be for innovation's sake but for the sake of real writing problem solving. A study in 1968 by Sullivan involved an analysis of the merits of traditional grammar, generative-transformational grammar, and no grammar.[31] This study involved six classes at the college level, each being taught by one of the aforementioned methods. Employed in the study at the beginning was the ACT English placement test, the raw scores of which were compared with the raw scores of an alternate version of the test at the end of the course. In another instance, two paragraphs were written by each student at the beginning and end of the course and scores compared. For additional revelations, grades received by the students through teacher evaluation were compared to post-test ACT raw scores and final rater evaluations. All three teaching approaches created some improvement among the students, for only seven students rated the same or declined. No teaching method was found to be more effective than another. Students rated higher generally on the ACT test when the agreement on student achievement was compared with the course grade, ACT post-test score and final rater evaluations.

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[30] Ibid., p. 3.

The bearing that Sullivan's study had on the investigation by the writer was that his work dealt with the connection that grammar ability has with writing in a first-year college course. A beginning and end performances measurement of students' writing was made by Sullivan, and this was a positive feature. This type of measurement was projected by the writer as a most worthwhile undertaking by instructors as they study writing problems.

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[31] Jerry Leonard Sullivan, "A Study of the Relative Merits of Traditional Grammar, Generative-Transformational Grammar or No Grammar in an Approach to Writing Communications One at Colorado State College," Dissertation Abstracts International, Vol. 29/08A (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 1968), p. 2686.

It appears, however, that Sullivan's study lacked a certain balance in testing with ACT or using those scores at the beginning and then comparing the results with an alternate version of the ACT at the end of the course. The sample used by Sullivan was small and tested only one geographical area with respect to competencies whereas this study was developed using a larger sample. Sullivan gave no remedies and developed his study with the aid of results tested by three instructors other than himself. The chi square analysis was used by Sullivan to determine change and Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance was used for rater reliability.

A study by Slay, called A Comparison of the Effectiveness of Programmed, Handbook, and Non-formalized Grammar Instruction in Remedial College Freshman English Composition, had as its purpose to study the effects of formal grammar instruction on changes in writing skills of students in remedial college English composition.[32] Slay used three groups of sixteen students each matched on SCAT total raw score, age, and sex. One group received formal grammar instruction with a traditional handbook while the experimental group had teacher-led classroom discussion, using overhead projector transparencies. When needed, specific grammar problems were pointed out by the teacher. Another group used a grammar textbook to establish the difference. There were no significant differences in writing skills at the end of the semester. The gain was small. It appeared, according to his study, that either method may be used, the only marked benefit being that with the programmed approach less time was required to teach, and student "fatigue," as Slay called it, was less. Slay determined that better testing instruments, specifically designed, were needed to measure writing skills for the two-year college, and this was the belief shared by the writer, for involved was a social urgency and something must be done.

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[32] Alan Lee Slay, "A Comparison of the Effectiveness of Programmed Handbook and Non-formalized Grammar Instruction in Remedial College Freshman English Composition," Dissertation Abstracts International, Vol. 30/04A (Ph.D. dissertation, St. Louis University, 1968), p. 1536.

More students were used in the writer's study than were used by Slay, thus providing a more credible sample. Students involved in the writer's study were remedial as well as those classified as regular English I, thus revealing commonality of writing difficulties.

Lash, in The Effect of Instruction in Transformational Grammar on Basic Writing Skills had as his purpose to analyze the effect of transformational grammar on basic writing skills and to evaluate student attitude toward instruction of this type.[33] Very specifically, the skills that were investigated were capitalization, punctuation and word usage. It should be indicated from the very beginning that Lash's experiment was carried on with ninth grade students, but his experiment related to the thesis of this investigation in that writing skills are of concern.

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[33] Henry Joseph Lash, "The Effect of Instruction in Transformational Grammar on Basic Writing Skills," Dissertation Abstracts International, Vol. 31/10A (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1970), p. 5383.

Lash studied one hundred ninth graders under the traditional grammar approach and one hundred ninth graders under the transformational approach for a period of six weeks with the aid of student teachers. The measurement of progress was the Junior High Level California Achievement Test #5 before and after the lesson approached. His findings were that there was no significant improvement difference for both the experimental and control groups. The transformational lessons functioned as well as the traditional unit. The most significant improvement for the entire experiment was in the area of attitude. It was Lash's contention that much more thought should be given to training teachers in transformational grammar. It has been this writer's experience, however, that a student would need to know basic grammar in order to comprehend fully transformational grammar as Lash proposed. If a person was given instruction in transformational grammar from the very beginning of his grammar learning experience, there is the possibility that he or she may learn by that method without great difficulty.

Related and noteworhy were the remarks by Guth who, in Three Faces of Rhetoric, expressed a kind of gratitude for the composition textbooks which have shifted emphasis from the finished product to how the finished product is produced.[34] The writer's study projected the idea in Recommendations that more emphasis on how to's in writing was that which college students needed to end the mire of writing mediocrity. Guth felt that more important than the rhetoric of order was the rhetoric of discovery. Further, he felt that a new set of watch-words should replace the old insistence on coherence, unity, and clarity. The new watch-words should be open-mindedness, skepticism, tentativeness, flexibility, diversity and dialogue. It was his belief that we should become more tolerant of complexity, irony, and paradox. Encouraged should be authentic observation, openness to experience and honest doubt which make for productive thinking. Composition, according to Guth, should be a putting together rather than a putting forth. "Writing honestly taught cannot help tending toward a broadening of perspectives, a kind of urban renewal of the mind," said Guth.[35] The principles advanced by Guth were fully supported by the writer of this investigation because of their valued progressiveness; they were forward-reaching and growth-promoting. There was short space in the article itself to provide a prescription. Further examination of the complete work, English for a New Generation, may provide the needed prescription.

Related to the writer's study was Shiflett's article,

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[34] Hans P. Guth, "Three Face of Rhetoric," College Composition and Communication 1 (February 1972):5.

[35] Ibid., p. 5.

"Story Workshop as a Method of Teaching Writing," in which she indicated that she had witnessed "turn-around liberations" in her students' attitudes toward reading and writing.[36] The investigator firmly believed in Shiflett's ideas as one way of developing student writing. Shiflett's attitude toward her course was to treat and develop students as writers, feeling that:

> They would go better equipped in their souls to learn, having found the imaginative connections and leaps of the mind which breath life, and paradoxically logic into textbook facts stripped of meaning by their loss of image and nuance. . . .[37]

In Shiflett's workshop, the student was directed to rely on his own voice as one main source in ability in the art of writing. The students experienced a connection of the physical voice to the voice with which they wrote and became excited about learning the skills of verbal expression. The process was telling, reading, and writing. The written exercise involved coaching aimed at getting students' perceptions onto paper through their voices with a minimum of interference. There was no limitation placed upon the writing topic. When students wrote a first draft, contrary to ususal classroom instructions, they were told that they should never stop to rearrange words, to worry about sentence structure, punctuation, spelling or grammar. The idea was that during the heat of the rough draft, anything whatever that would block the rapid flow of perceptions or sense of movement was to be avoided. Grammar and all other things which are essential to clear writing were to be given all due attention in the proper order of things, that is, before the final draft and at the end of the process of rewriting or retelling.

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[36] Betty Shiflett, "Story Workshop as a Method of Teaching Writing," College English 35 (November 1973):141.

[37] Ibid.

Shiflett's study, however, made no mention of the necessity of filling the knowledge gap which is so much in evidence in many college compositions.

Related to the student responses in the writer's study with regard to their personal feelings about their writing problems was Klein's work entitled, "Self-Composition."[38] His assessment of the possible feelings of students and reasons for writing inability centered around the belief that those who could not write suffered from a psychological dysfunction. They fear a kind of illogical and capricious element in objections of their teachers to grammar used. Klein was of the opinion that students know when they are being manipulated by technology, and this makes them feel resentful and powerless. Klein felt, further, that students feel dehumanized and that their writing becomes not a matter of human communication but a demand of the "technocracy" which is a kind of composition class war.

The solution to this non-productive atmosphere, according to Klein, involved the following:

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[38] James Klein, "Self-Composition," College English 35 (October 1973-May 1974):584.

1. Students are allowed to believe that participation is utilitarian

2. No grades are given until the end of the semester

3. Students are to work at their own pace

4. There are no assigned topics

5. Papers are discussed with the student in class

6. When they become bored, they write about how bored they are

7. When they have grammar questions, they solve them by referring to their corrections

8. There is no text

9. Students are to come into the course forgetting what they have been taught

10. They are told to write their way to complete freedom, and this is the only assignment given

11. They are to buy a loose-leaf notebook full of paper which is to serve as their text, their literature, and their grammar[39]

Although Klein's statements were set forth in an article and his prescription limited, in the writer's opinion, his ideas can serve to clarify a great deal with regard to the cause of the many student writing difficulties which are the subject of this paper.

Freedom and Discipline in English, a report of the Commission on English, serves to illustrate the significance of and need for a comprehensive and prescriptive writing program in colleges and universities. The Commission's report advanced the idea that instructors should teach in such a way as to present more of the how-to's of writing and indicated the emphasis that must be placed on connecting and defending literature on the same basis as grammar, and the need for good, clear-cut instruction in grammar.[40] Though the Commission's efforts were aimed at one group, the college preparatory students, and the writer's study was directed toward all matriculating college students, there was validity in referring to the report because such a report was intended to influence all tracks and all levels.

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[39] Ibid., p. 484.

The Commission justified the teaching of grammar on the basis that grammar study was necessary for or was at least helpful in the eradication of faults; grammar study makes possible easier communication between teacher and student; grammar study was necessary as preparation for the study of foreign languages; and it is helpful on the basis that it is a good discipline. Further, the Commission felt that grammatical analysis was a shorter way to the student's understanding of discrepancies between casual and formal syntax and that grammar study has great intrinsic value and intellectual appeal. Important are the Commissioners' feelings that students sense the disparity between the language and syntax of written composition and oral composition. This disparity extends, they feel, from organization to usage and the student does not know, unless he is taught, how to deal with it.

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[40] Freedom and Discipline in English (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1965), p. 82.

Instructors of English are advised in the Commission's report "to teach students to become judicious arbiters rather than unthinking imitators of inherited patterns."[41] Teachers are to treat students' papers "as if they were works of art, the offspring of the writers, little pieces of themselves,"[42] as it were. It was their job, according the Commissioners, to incite healthy grapplings with sound, provocative topics.

The Commissioners cautioned humanists against putting all their eggs in the basket of utility and support constant application of principles as a means of keeping grammatical knowledge and terminology active.

The thrust of Composition for Personal Growth, a book primarily written for grades seven through twelve, but which advances values applicable to the value emphasis which was suggested in Recommendations in this study, is evident in the following statement:[43]

> Traditional schooling prunes branches and trains tender shoots toward superficial aims, all the while neglecting the nourishment of the roots, which, hidden and silent, lie shallow and small and struggle to support the full growth of the plant. Thus is the maturing plant robbed of the full realization of the potentialities which were promised in its seed. The problem is massive. Our schools are vast nurseries where few trees are nourished at the root. . . .

Primarily, this text "proposes by linking personal growth to the teaching of written composition, to inject into the traditional curriculum the vital issues of personal growth and self-awareness."[44]

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[41] Ibid., p. 82. [42] Ibid., p. 87

[43] Robert C. Hawley, Sidney B. Simon, and David D. Britton, Composition for Personal Growth--Values Clarification Through Writing (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1973), p. 13.

Valuable suggestions for altering the traditional approach used to teach composition are that the subject matter to be written about be important to the student himself, involving him[45] in such questions as Who am I? What do I value? How am I perceived by others? How might I change? Suggested also was the idea that more emphasis should be placed on the interested receiver, one highly susceptible to influence. Readers of the book are reminded that the audience is important to the student as the one related to his needs for identity, power, affiliation.

Real-world goals which are suggested as a point of alteration would stress that the writer was supposed to influence his audience, not just to write well. Stressed also in this work, Composition for Personal Growth, is real-world feedback. It was pointed out that good writing influences the audience as the writer intends. Direct response from the audience was described as the primary source of feedback, and sharing writing reactions from others is the secondary source.[46]

This book also reminds readers that competition grading is harmful and replaces this old approach with a focus on learning how to learn and developing critical thinking skills through thinking critically.

This writer agrees with the editors of Composition for Personal Growth that the entire writing atmosphere is too negative and that mechanics receive disproportionate attention. The attempt here was to redress the balance, putting the emphasis on getting the desired message across to the desired audience. The effectiveness of the communication is, of course, related to its mechanical and rhetorical qualities. Thus the study of these technical aspects of writing came when it was needed--when there was a problem in communication or a student-initiated desire to improve communication--rather than when the textbook schedule says it's that time. Style and mechanics seem too often to be regarded as ends in themselves, instead of as means to an end--effective communication.[47]

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[44] Ibid., p. 13 [45] Ibid., p. 14. [46] Ibid., p. 15.

In the writer's study, the kinds of assignments given by freshman composition instructors are provided. This assignment concern was discussed by Branscomb in "Turning the Corner: Story to Meaning in Freshman Composition Classes."[48] Branscomb wrote about the number of trivial narrative papers that many freshman composition instructors have to read each week. Instead of sending freshmen to the library to spend hours researching a subject that may be boring, he believes that freshmen have at their fingertips through personal experiences all the material that they need for writing but too often reflect these experiences in dull, first-person narratives. Branscomb suggested that the challenge for writing teachers was to get the students to take the critical approach toward their experiences and turn to wider meanings and truth in their writing. Stressed is writing something that the student knows more about, something with which he has had experience. Branscomb was very much aware of the fact that his assignments bordered on the writing teacher's cliche, "write about what your know," but was striving for meaning in student writing. He felt that simple narration was the mode for best presenting unique experiences and was aware of possible disadvantages of the approach.

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[47] Ibid., p. 17.

[48] H. Eric Branscomb, "Turning the Corner: Story to Meaning in Freshman Composition Classes," Research in the Teaching of English 10 (Spring 1976):663-664.

Responses from instructors involved in this study revealed that assignment topics are, in many instances, geared to evoke student responses on things in their everyday lives. At the same time, writing situations take on added significance because the assignments are beginning to require values-plumbing by students.

The 1976 issue of American School Board Journal was related to this study because it dealt with effects of, need for, reflections of basic skills as they relate to writing. The article involved a reflection by Newsweek that even where writing is still taught, the creative school discourages insistence on grammar, structure and style because the teachers feel that rules stifle spontaniety.[49] Given also was the response of Elisabeth McPherson, a community college English teacher, who considered whether the failure to teach standard English denied children a chance at higher ranking jobs that require standard English. Her response was that "the important thing is that people find themselves through their own language."[50]

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[49] David L. Martin, "Why Too Many Kids Can't Read or Write or Add," American School Board Journal, 163N (February 1976):21-23.

The article advanced the idea that if a student was not taught basic skills in elementary school or in high school or in college and goes on to become a teacher, one might assume that this person will not be able to teach his students the basic skills that he does not possess. This idea recalls Fisher's "Why Nobody Can't Write Good" as he placed part of the blame for student failure on teacher preparation.[51] Just as there are implications for more concentrated preparation for prospective teachers of English in the writer's study, there are significant implications for employed English instructors, for in this report there was the insistence that teachers be able to read, spell, and perform arithmetic function at least to eighth grade level because many college graduates, including those certified as teachers, have skills in reading, spelling and arithmetic well below the eighth grade level. The article continued by reporting that the school board in Stamford, Connecticut, passed a resolution requiring demonstration of mastery of written and spoken English as a prerequisite to teachers' being hired and currently employed teachers were required to pass an English test or receive remedial training.

Additional significant statements from the American

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[50] Ibid., p. 22.

[51] Fisher, "Why Nobody Can't Write Good," p. 16.

School Board Journal are as follows:

> Today, critics--and they are legion--are convinced that billions of tax dollars aren't simply buying slow progress, they seem to be buying no progress.
>
> Personnel officials say, "Errors we once found commonly in applications for high school graduates are now cropping up in forms from people with four-year college degrees."
>
> One hopes solutions will accord a new priority to competency in reading, writing and arithmetic. . . . For the entire public education system, this priority might mean that resources are concentrated on teaching basic skills--and that other programs are de-emphasized until, say, a university such as that of the City of New York no longer need fret that 10,000 of its undergraduate students are unable to read at eighth grade level.[52]

In January 1976 issue of College English, Rudnick in "A High School Teacher Surveys College Grammar" reported of a survey undertaken which relates to this study. He spoke of an eclectic program tried at Miramonte High, a college-prep school in San Francisco with new and old grammar on the ninth grade level. The approaches were transformational, traditional and, specifically for the tenth grade, Guthian.[53] Three years later, Rudnick found that the students were doing no better. He wondered what relationship their grammar program had with the expectations of the colleges and if college instructors used the language of the new grammar in their classes and in comments on student papers.

In connection with this concern, Rudnick, in 1972, sent a questionnaire to forty-seven colleges and universities seeking a response to the following:

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[52] Martin, "Too Many Kids," pp. 21-23.

[53] Norman Rudnick, "A High School Teacher Surveys College Grammar," College English 37 (January 1976):518-522.

1. Does the department use a specific grammar language?

2. Does the department offer specific grammar and composition courses? What grammar language is used in texts and classes?

3. If objective grammar tests are given in entrance exams, what grammar language is used?

4. Are challenge tests of CLEP kind given?

5. If the department has a teacher preparation course, what grammar system is used?

6. Does the new grammar do a better job than the older grammar in assisting to produce competent sentences, paragraphs, themes?

Rudnick received thirty-three department responses. The questionnaire aroused a babel of conflicting, contradictory and sometimes hesitant voices, reflecting that there was a complete lack of agreement among college people on language, grammar and related topics, reflecting that some ignored or seemed unaware of the relationship that does or does not exist between grammar and composition, and indicating that there was a conservative influence of CEEB and ETS which dominated the tests that the high school student must pass to prove readiness for college.

As was the case in this study, comments from college instructors were received and analyzed for their value in improving writing of freshman composition students. Comments received by Rudnick were noted as representing different geographic sections of the United States, as in this work.

Comments were as follows:

1. Prestigious eastern college: instruct students in traditional grammar, punctuation and spelling

2. Large California university: there is no value in the survey. It is well meaning but misguided. Search for a decent theory of composition rather than an up-to-date-meta language

3. Another opinion: transformational grammar is of the future (tainted with cynicism and infirm faith)

4. Western college person: the trend is in the direction of generative/transformational mode

5. Midwestern respondent: the traditional view has to be modified in the interest of truth even if the new view cannot obviously improve writing skills[54]

Conclusions drawn by Rudnick were that, because of College Board Examinations, he should continue with the old grammar, drop Roberts' transformational grammar and retain Guth in the tenth year. He based his conclusions on the ideas that any attempt to teach grammar systems would be self-defeating; consistency of approach is better than eclecticism; students well-grounded in one grammar language should be able to adjust to variations of other meta languages and teachers are responsible for performance of students on the College Boards. Recommended was an extended colloquy of English teachers from K through the graduate level.

Although the present investigation does not have as a sample thirty-three colleges and universities, it is felt that most significant results will be obtained because incorporated are student feelings with regard to recognition of their own inadequacies and attributable causes as they see them.

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[54] Ibid., p. 519.

Knapp expressed in "Contract/Conference Evaluations of Freshman Composition," March 1976 the idea that the paper which initiated the whole process of communication was itself subject to minimal communication.[55] In order for students to develop a writing style, Knapp felt that practice and more of a willingness to take risks and great leaps of verbal faith are necessary. He felt that our process of teaching writing defeats the purpose. Suggested was the diminishing of the notion of evaluation as a mysterious ritual which was understood only by instructors who are envisioned as high priests; elevation of the idea of writing as on-going communication open to public scrutiny; creating an atmosphere in which he (Knapp) could enjoy the act of evaluation, and students could feel the importance of writing by his individual attention to their papers.

Papers reviewed by Knapp are judged acceptable or unacceptable. Those marked unacceptable are rewritten until they pass. There are provisional OK's for those who lag behind in the unacceptable category too long. Skills are articulated in light of students' particular needs. Student needs are revealed in the survey under investigation and many instructors will profit as a result of sharing in this revelation of human frailty. Knapp also was concerned with the human aspect of writing problems, for he said that writing problems are obviated by the conference system which adds the human touch. Knapp added that his system takes full advantage of the face-to-face learning process, a process that metacommunicates to students the importance of writing in an age of decline.

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[55] John V. Knapp, "Contract/Conference Evaluations of Freshman Composition," College English 37 (March 1976):647-653.

Germane to this study of the entire writing syndrome are all works which have been reviewed. There was voiced concern; there was recognition of the social urgency of the problems that confront students in writing compositions; there was the recognition that all things are related; thus, realized was the urgency for a more comprehensive program which addresses itself to specific writing needs without leaving out any details of the writing process which has been the case in too many instance in the past.

Error identification, disciplines, skill raising, broadening of perspectives, diversity, dialogue are key words to the nature of the literature reviewed, and this was indicative of progress.

CHAPTER III

POPULATION, INSTRUMENTS, PROCEDURE INSTRUCTIONS AND SCORING

As has been explained in Chapter I, the focus of this study was a delineation of writing problems of first-year college students in English as perceived by instructors of English and as perceived by students by means of surveys.

The study had four purposes: (1) to determine the regional extent of the syndrome of writing inadequacy among students in first-year college and university composition classes, (2) to identify and categorize errors, (3) to determine what instructors as well as students felt about first-year composition inadequacies, and (4) to provide a profile of composition errors which could lead to a productive methodological approach to minimize the errors.

In light of the focus and purpose of the study, the population, instruments, procedure, and scoring are outlined.

Phase I. Population

The population of Phase I of the study involved a combined total of six colleges and universities and two community colleges from southeastern, central western, and northeastern regions of the United States.

For a more specific breakdown on population, Table 6 indicates student types, region, institution selection, and number of responses involved.

Instruments

Four general questionnaire-type instruments were developed for gathering data for this study. Generally, these instruments were developed for use in regular instructional procedures by writers over the past decade and are further described as follows:

Instructor Assessment

The Instructor Survey (IS) is a two-page questionnaire which instructors were asked to complete. The survey, by its questions, led to an assessment of student errors as instructors of the involved regions perceived them. The questions on the form asked instructors to give examples of the following: (1) sample short essay questions given when testing, (2) long writing assignments, (3) comments on general writing readiness of students as revealed by their papers, and (4) specific weakness of papers as they apply to composition (Appendix A).

Essay Competency

The National Student Survey (NSS) is a two-page questionnaire, testing student competency with essay-writing principles, which was developed by the writer and was based on writing errors which had been detected as a result of ten years' experience in teaching on the college level. This survey asked questions concerning the following: (1) thesis sentences, (2) sentence fragments, (3) agreement, (4) outlining, (5) paragraph development, and (6) allusions and imagery (Appendix B).

Procedure

The choice of institutions to be involved in the survey was made on the basis of the writer's knowledge of the institution's academic reputation (those that have always received public acclaim as offering the best instructional program and had the highest academic standards) on the basis of personal acquaintance with some of the instructors from the institution, and on the basis of prior communication with some English instructors from the institutions about types of assignments given. This had been done several years prior in an effort to keep my classes abreast of those other college classes in the nation.

Additionally, the choice of institutions was a result of mention and discussion of some of the institutions at NCTE and CCTE conferences attended, and on the basis of random selection from the northern, southern, eastern, and western parts of our nation for possible geographic implications.

Written request for participation were sent as follows:

Instruments Sent

In Phase I (beginning September 1975, and ending January 1976) each of fourteen regional institutions was sent the

TABLE 6

INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS INVOLVED IN STUDY

Phase I	Type of Institution	Region[1]	Institution Selection	Number[2] Involved	
Instructors, Institution D	4-year, restricted	Central	Academic reputation	IS	6
Instructors, Institution E	4-year, restricted	Central	Academic reputation	IS	7
Students, Institution E	4-year regular, restricted	Central	Adademic reputation	NSS	24
Instructors, Institution H	4-year, restricted	Northeastern	Academic association	IS	2
Instructors, Institution G	4-year, restricted	Central	Academic	NSS	1
Instructors, Institution B	2-year regular, open	Western	Personal acquaintance	IS	2
Students, Institution B	2-year regular, open	Western	Personal acquaintance	NSS	25
Instructors, Institution A	2-year, open	Western	Writer's institution	IS	0
Students, Institution A	2-year regular, open	Western	Writer's institution	NSS	54
Students, Institution A	2-year remedial, open	Western	Writer's institution	NSS	62
Instructors, Institution C	4-year, restricted	Western	Academic reputation	IS	8
Instructor, Institution F	4-year, restricted	Southeastern	Random	IS	4
Students, Institution F	4-year regular, restricted	Southeastern	Random	NSS	13

[1] Describes areas of the United States as defined by the Office of Business Economics, Department of Commerce.

[2] IS - Instructor Survey; NSS - National Student Survey.

10 Instructor Surveys and 30 National Student Surveys (Appendices A and B). The writer administered 116 National Student Surveys to two of her classes included in the number of institutions above.

Instruments Returned

Six of the fourteen institutions from the regions listed below responded by filling in answers to the questionnaires (Appendices A and B). Total returns in Phase I are as follows:

Region	Instructor Survey	National Student Survey
Southeastern	4	13
Western	10	141
Central	14	49
Northeastern	2	28

The writer's institution, which was Western, provided 116 of the 141 National Student Surveys for the Western region. Institutions not responding in this section were institutions B, E, F, and G.

Upon receipt of the surveys in Phase I, the procedure was as follows:

1. Each student response was logged and labled with the institution's name and level of response (remedial or regular) and region

2. The student responses to the National Student Survey were placed in a packet for tabulation as to the number received

3. The packet contents were hand-scored for the total number correct per tested category

4. Entries were made on a worksheet for temporary tabulation per institution

5. The _National Student Survey_ did not require the student name, thus pairing with Grammar Diagnostic and Composition Diagnostic was not possible

6. Questions 17 and 18 of the _National Student Survey_, which provided students with an opportunity to respond in a way versus regarding grammatical preparation, were analyzed and statements were recorded for gains in human insight and writing problem reality (the problem as perceived from depths of student feeling).

7. The _Instructor Survey_ sheets were counted and labeled by institution and region. The responses were then analyzed. Upon receipt, answers were recorded in segments paralleling the questions per institution.

Standardized Instructions

There were directions accompanying letter to the instructors who were to administer the diagnostics. The general nature of the directions was:

Cover Letter:

1. Indication given of specific dissertation topic
2. Assistance asked for
3. Indication of number of classes desired for involvement
4. Indication of desire for labeling results
5. Indication of enclosures (Appendices A and B).

Questionnaire Directions:

1. Instructor Survey. Single sentence directions given for each desired result (Appendix A)

2. National Student Survey. Directions to answer given questions to the best of their ability (Appendix B).

Human Element Assessment

Responses to Questions 17 and 18 of the National Student Survey (Appendix B) were analyzed for frailty admission by the student which was their personal values expression, and for an expression of human emotions, such as anger, disappointment, fear, elation. All responses that matched these categories were recorded under the following headings as indications of student feelings about their writing inadequacies: (1) course offerings' failure, (2) instructor failure, (3) self-failure admission, and (4) feelings which are described as impunitive.

Scoring

In the case of the National Student Survey, two assistants were used, each being provided with answer keys. More specifically, scoring was as follows:

National Student Survey

The National Student Survey, readily permitting quantitative measurement, was objective in nature with the possibility of variously worded answers but all answers had to be logical and to the point. For ease of tabulation, questions involving varying aspects of essay writing principles were grouped as follows:

Students were scored by counting the correct answers to questions 1 through 3, 4 through 6, 7, 9 through 13, and 15.

Questions 17 and 18 were used later for assessment of the human element. Questions 8 and 14 were counted but omitted from the table display and were reserved for personal accumulation of background information.

Phase II. Population

The population of Phase II involved one community college and three four-year colleges from the same regions as indicated above.

For a more specific breakdown on population, Table 7 indicates institution type, region, basis for institution selection and the number of persons responding.

Instruments

Grammar Competency

The Grammar Diagnostic (GD) which was revised and used by the writer with permission from the publishers[56] asked students for responses in the following areas:

	Number of Responses Needed
Parts of speech	4
Spelling	3
Pronouns	3
Subjects and verbs	6

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[56] Harry J. Sachs, Harry M. Brown, and P. Joseph Conovan, A Workbook for Writers (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1970), pp. 1-8.

TABLE 7

INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS INVOLVED IN STUDY

Phase II	Type of Institution	Region[1]	Institution Selection	Number[2] Involved
Strudents, Institution D	4-year regular, restricted	Central	Academic repurtation	GD 63 CD 40
Students, Institution D	4-year remedial, restricted	Central	Academic reputation	GD 16
Students, Institution H	4-year regular, restricted	Northeastern	Academic association	GD 28 CD 28
Students, Institution A	2-year remedial, open	Western	Writer's institution	GD 62 CD 66
Students, Institution C	4-year regular, restricted	Western	Academic reputation	GD 39 CD 39

[1] Describes areas of the United States as defined by the Office of Business Economics, Department of Commerce.

[2] Diagnostic: CD - Composition Diagnostic
GD - Grammar

	Number of Responses Needed	
Modifiers	2	
Agreement	3	
Verb forms	3	(Appendix C)

Composition Competency

The Composition Diagnostic (CD) asked students to write a composition in response to Marie Leiderman's topic, "You will be reborn tomorrow morning. You may come back as anything you choose except yourself. What would you like to come back as? Why?"[57] (Appendix D). This diagnostic tested student ability in content, form, and mechanics.

Procedure

The choice of institutions to be involved in the survey was made on the basis of the writer's knowledge of the institution's academic reputation, on the basis of personal acquaintance, and on the basis of prior communication with some English instructors from the institutions as specifically indicated in the Procedure for Phase I.

Instruments Sent

In Phase II (beginning August 1976, and ending November 1976) each of the same fourteen regional institutions was sent 80 Grammar Diagnostics and 80 Composition Diagnostics (Appendices C and D). The writer administered 121 Grammar Diagnostics and 131 Composition Diagnostics to her own classes.

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[57] John McNamara, "Teaching the Process of Writing," College English 34 (October 1973-May 1974):660.

Instruments Returned

Returns in Phase II were from Institutions A, C, D, and H from the regions listed below responding to questions on the Grammar Diagnostic and Composition Diagnostic (Appendices D and E).

Region	Grammar Diagnostic	Composition Diagnostic
Central	79	40
Western	160	166
Northeastern	28	28

The writer's institution provided 121 of the 160 Grammar Diagnostics and 131 of the 166 Composition Diagnostics in the western region. Institutions B. E. F, and G did not respond to this phase.

Upon receipt of the surveys in Phase II, the procedure was as follows:

1. Each student response was logged and labeled with the institution's name and level of response (remedial or regular) and region

2. The student responses were placed in packets, one being the grammar diagnostic, another the essay diagnostic, all for tabulation as to the number received in each category

3. Next, each packet was hand-scored for the total number on the Grammar Diagnostic and the number of errors on the Composition Diagnostic

4. Entries were made on a worksheet for temporary tabulation per institution

5. Attempted next was pairing of individual student responses with the grammar composition diagnostics per

student. Pairing was not totally accomplished with grammar and essay diagnostics because student names were not filled in, in many instances. It is possible that late class arrivals, absences on date of administering the survey prevented ideal packaging and pairing

6. In October 1976, a follow-up letter (copy of original letter of transmittal, Appendix B) with three boxes to be checked regarding status of surveys was sent to each institution solicited in Phase II. Requested was a check beside one of the following: (a) surveys completed and being returned, (b) unable to complete survey, and (c) surveys to be given but not completed.

The answers to three follow-up letters were noted and data were closed the first part of November 1976.

Standardized Instructions

There were directions accompanying letters to the instructors who were to administer the diagnostics. The general nature of the directions was as follows:

Cover Letter:

1. Indication given for specific dissertation topic
2. Assistance asked for
3. Indication of number of classes desired for involvement
4. Indication of desire for labeling results
5. Indication of enclosures (Appendices D and E).

Scoring

Scoring of the Composition Diagnostic was accomplished by the writer. In the case of the Grammar Diagnostic Survey, two assistants were used, each being provided with answer keys. More specifically, scoring was as follows:

Grammar Diagnostic

The Grammar Diagnostic was objective in nature and required precise answers. It readily lent itself to quantitative measurement. The Grammar Diagnostic was scored by counting the number of correct responses to each question. There were twenty-four possible responses.

Composition Diagnostic

The Composition Diagnostic was graded by the writer counting the number of errors made by students in the following categories: spelling, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, agreements, parallelism, wrong word, and sentence structure.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Findings were based solely on the four major instruments utilized in the study: (1) Instructor Survey (IS); (2) National Student Survey (NSS); (3) Grammar Diagnostic (GD); (4) Composition Diagnostic (CD); Appendices A, B, C, and D, respectively. The contents of this chapter were arranged sequentially in relation to these instruments.

Coding used in reference to the institution involved in the study is repeated at this point for reading convenience:

Institution	Region	Type	Admission
A	Western	two-year	open
B	Western	two-year	open
C	Western	four-year	restricted
D	Central	four-year	restricted
E	Central	four-year	restricted
F	Southeastern	four-year	restricted
G	Central	four-year	restricted
H	Northeastern	four-year	restricted

Instructor Survey

Findings reported were based on comments by thirty faculty members from seven of the institutions listed above. The writer's institution was not a part of the Instructor Survey (IS).

Sample Short Form Essay Questions

The questions were arranged in functional groupings for analysis as indicated in Table 8. Table 8 shows the functional grouping of sample short essay questions used by thirty faculty members from seven institutions. It further reveals the number of faculty responses per topic area and the percentage of total responses per essay topic area. Only brief question excerpts are included at this point; for a more detailed assignment description, see "Conclusions."

According to Table 8, argumentative writing topics were represented with the highest assignment percentage of 39.02 percent. Next in order of percentile (26.83) was the type of assignment that involves personal feelings exploration. Literary subjects reaction was used by 14.63 percent. Short essay assignments requiring descriptive writing had a representative use of 7.3 percent. Short essay topics involving analysis of social situations and those topics involving comparative writing ranked 4.9 percent. The lowest percentage of short essay topics assigned (2.5 percent) was in the persuasive writing category. There were not short essay assignments based on rhetorical or definition writing. These two categories were included in the long essay topics response category.

Sample Long Form Essay Questions

The questions were arranged in the same functional grouping for analysis as in Table 8. Table 9 shows the functional grouping of long essay writing situations assigned by the thirty faculty members from the same seven institutions

TABLE 8

FUNCTIONAL GROUPING OF SAMPLE SHORT ESSAY QUESTIONS USED BY THIRTY FACULTY MEMBERS FROM SEVEN INSTITUTIONS

Functional Groups	Number of Faculty Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Argumentative Writing A standing practice in law	16	39.0
Personal Feelings Exploration 1. What I do well 2. Necessity for belief in oneself	11	26.8
Literary Subjects Reaction 1. Kesey's first person narrator in Cuckoo's Nest 2. Social criticism in Catch-22	6	14.6
Description 1. Accomplishing a task 2. What an object suggests	3	7.3
Analysis of Social Situations 1. Popular music and culture 2. Television affecting life quality	2	4.9
Comparative Writing 1. Home and dormitory 2. Philosophies behind "out of sight--out of mind" versus "absence makes the heart grow fonder"	2	4.9
Persuasive 1. Impress reader with the importance of composition 2. Demand money back for unsatisfactory product	1	2.5
*Rhetorical	0	0
*Definition	0	0
TOTAL	41	100.0

*There were no short essay assignments given in these two categories; these two categories are part of Table 9.

TABLE 9

FUNCTIONAL GROUPING OF SAMPLE LONG WRITING ASSIGNMENTS USED BY THIRTY FACULTY MEMBERS FROM SEVEN INSTITUTIONS

Functional Groups	Number of Faculty Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Literary Subjects Reaction 1. Dickens' Biblical allusion in *Hard Times*. 2. *Cuckoo's Nest* revealing point of view, character, imagery of themes.	22	32.4
Rhetorical Passage of modern fiction: purpose, structure, use of language, rhetorical devices.	17	25.0
Argumentative Writing 1. Education "makes a straight-cut ditch of a free meandering brook," Thoreau. Agree and/or disagree. 2. Write you own "Modest Proposal."	9	13.2
Comparative Writing 1. The short story, "The Lottery" and the movie of it. 2. Two items: parents, friends, books, movies.	5	7.4
Definition Concept of peace. Use three aspects of the analogy of your choice.	5	7.4
Analysis of Social Situations Effects of being racially tolerant.	4	5.9
Description 1. A jet flight. 2. A hog killing.	3	4.4
Personal Feelings Exploration 1. A classroom experience. 2. What I am.	2	2.9
Persuasive 1. Bringing back the whipping post. 2. The arming of campus police.	1	1.5
TOTALS	68	100.0

as used in Table 8. The table reveals the number of faculty responses per topic area and the percentage of total responses per essay topic area. Nine independently organized groups with brief question excerpts are included.

According to Table 9, literary subjects reaction is required for 32.4 percent of the writing assignments. Rhetorical writing situations are given 25.0 percent instances. Argumentative writing topics are assigned by 13.2 percent. Comparative writing topics are used in 7.4 percent instances. Next in order of frequency use is the definition writing assignment by 7.3 percent. Analyses of social situations are used by 5.9 percent. Descriptive writing assignments are used by 4.41 percent. Essay writing topics that involve personal feelings exploration are used by 2.9 percent. The persuasive writing assignment is used in 9.5 percent of the instances.

General Writing Readiness Areas

These questions were arranged in functional groupings for analysis as indicated in Table 10. Employed in Table 10 is the functional grouping of comments on seven areas of general writing readiness of the students involved in the study by thirty faculty members from seven institutions. Provided in the table is the number of faculty responses per writing readiness area and the percentage of total responses per writing readiness area.

Table 10 shows that of the overall general areas of writing readiness, students are least ready to perform well in the area of rhetorical skills by 32.3 percent. Next in order,

TABLE 10

FUNCTIONAL GROUPING OF COMMENTS ON AREAS OF GENERAL WRITING READINESS MADE BY THIRTY FACULTY MEMBERS FROM SEVEN INSTITUTIONS

Functional Groups	Number of Faculty Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Rhetorical Skills	21	32.3
Composition Organization and Design	14	21.5
Generalizations without Support	8	12.3
Coherence	5	7.7
Logical Presentation	5	7.7
Vocabulary	5	7.7
Student Apprehension about Language Usage	4	6.2
Critical Writing Ability	3	4.6
TOTALS	65	100.0

the general area in which students are least ready is composition organization by 21.5 percent. The table shows that the next area in which students are least ready to perform well is generalizations without adequate support. Ranking together at 7.7 percent as three areas in which students are least ready to perform well are coherence, vocabulary, and logical presentation. Student apprehension about language usage appeared in the comments by 6.2 percent. Critical writing ability is represented in the comments as an area in which students are least ready by 4.6 percent.

Specific Weaknesses Related to Composition

These questions were arranged in functional groupings for analysis as indicated in Table 11. Functionally grouped are responses in sixteen areas by thirty faculty members from seven institutions. The number of faculty responses and the percentage of total responses are shown per area of writing weakness.

The area in which the greatest weaknesses appeared was thesis problems by 13.1 percent. The next area of weakness was agreement by 10.1 percent. Paragraph division and word usage areas were the next areas of weakness by 9.1 percent each. Sentence fragments were represented in responses by 8.2 percent as an area of weakness. Faculty conclusions and punctuation were represented as areas of weakness by 7.1 percent each. Unity and organization were given as an area of writing weakness by 6.0 percent. Represented as areas of

TABLE 11

FUNCTIONAL GROUPING OF COMMENTS ABOUT WEAKNESSES OF COMPOSITIONS BY THIRTY FACULTY MEMBERS FROM SEVEN INSTITUTIONS

Functional Groups	Number of Faculty Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Thesis Problems	13	13.1
Agreement	10	10.1
Paragraph Division	9	9.1
Word Usage	9	9.1
Sentence Fragments	8	8.1
Punctuation	7	7.1
Faulty Conclusions	7	7.1
Unity and Organization	6	6.0
Tense	5	5.1
Spelling	5	5.1
Transition	5	5.1
General or Abstract Language	4	4.0
Modification	3	3.0
Misuse of Possessives	3	3.0
Clarity	3	3.0
Sentence Structure	2	2.0
TOTAL	99	100.0

weakness by 5.1 percent each are spelling, tense and transitional expressions. There was a weakness in the area of general or abstract language by 4.0 percent. Weakness in the area of misuse of possessives is represented by 3.1 percent. The areas of modification and clarity are represented by 3.0 percent each. Weaknesses in the area of sentence structure appeared in responses by 2.0 percent.

National Student Survey

Regional Responses

Findings reported in Table 12 were based on responses by 172 regular students from four regions, the writer's institution being included among these.

Description. The items to which the students responded by region are arranged in Table 12. The table shows the number of correct student responses by item and by region along with percentages. Questions one, two and three of the National Student Survey were placed in Group I. Questions four, five, six and nine are in Group II. Questions seven, ten, and sixteen are in Group III. Questions eleven, twelve, thirteen and fifteen are in Group IV. Questions eight and fourteen of the National Student Survey (Parts of Speech and the Critical Essay, respectively) were omitted from tabulation display, for the responses to these questions were of interest to the writer in a very general sense of accumulating background information, parts of speech being very basic and knowledge of the critical essay giving an indication of

TABLE 12

STUDENT COMPETENCY AS DEPICTED BY SCORES ON THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY SHOWING REGIONAL NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES FOR REGULAR STUDENTS

	Functional Groups	Western N = 82		Central N = 49		Southeastern N = 13		Northeastern N = 28		TOTAL N = 172	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I	Essay Definition	41	50.0	2	4.08	3	23.1	27	96.4	73	42.4
	Knowledge of Thesis	42	51.2	2	4.08	12	92.3	27	96.4	83	48.3
	Actual Thesis Writing	52	63.4	34	59.40	8	61.5	19	67.9	113	65.7
	TOTAL	135	54.9	38	50.30	23	59.0	73	86.9	269	52.1
II	Sentence Fragment										
	Recognition	37	45.1	29	59.20	8	61.5	25	89.3	99	57.6
	Revision	21	25.6	33	67.30	7	53.8	27	96.4	88	51.2
	Run-on Sentence	21	25.6	19	38.80	11	84.6	27	96.4	78	45.3
	Agreement	36	43.9	28	57.10	9	69.2	27	96.4	100	58.1
	TOTAL	115	35.1	109	55.60	35	67.3	106	94.6	365	53.1
III	Imagery	10	12.2	35	71.40	5	38.5	18	64.3	68	39.5
	Allusions	6	7.3	25	51.00	2	15.4	9	32.1	42	24.4
	TOTAL	27	11.0	87	59.2	11	28.4	38	45.2	163	31.6

TABLE 12 (continued)

Functional Groups	Western N = 82		Central N = 49		Southeastern N = 13		Northeastern N = 28		TOTAL N = 172	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
IV Outlining Use	39	39.8	12	24.5	8	61.5	28	100.0	87	50.6
Topic Sentence	10	12.2	6	12.2	4	30.8	22	78.6	42	24.4
Paragraph Development	4	4.9	24	49.0	3	23.1	13	46.4	44	25.6
Essay Conclusions	27	32.9	12	24.5	3	23.1	19	67.9	61	35.5
TOTAL	80	24.4	54	27.6	18	34.6	82	73.2	234	34.0
Group Totals	357		288		87		299		1031	
Group Means	25.5	31.1	20.6	42.0	6.2	47.7	21.4	76.4	73.6	42.8
Group Standard Deviations	15.2		11.7		3.2		6.6			

student writing potential.

Importance. The analysis of variance for scores on the National Student Survey indicated that individual functional groups are not a significant source of variance; however, as the raw data shows, those categories grouped together as Functional Group IV seem to form a problem area for most students (see Table 13).

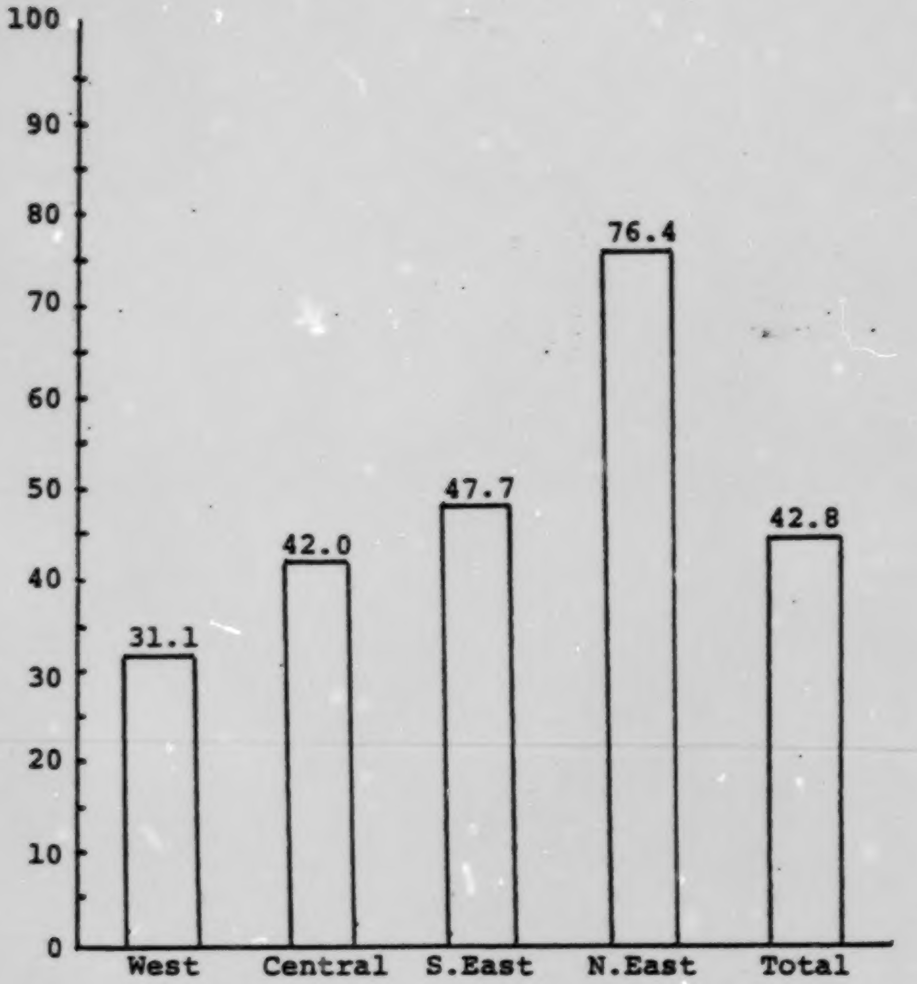
Geographical region is a significant source of variance (probability less than .05). Inspection of Figure 4 indicates that students in the northeast did much better (76.4%), on the average, than students elsewhere. Students in the west performed worst (31.1%) among those in the survey. Only thirteen students responded to the survey from the southeast region, so this value (47.7%) is not as statistically significant as the others.

The western region seems to have its greatest writing problem in functional Groups III and IV, while it is strongest in Functional Group I. The central region, on the other hand, is strongest in Functional Groups I and IV. The southeastern region's problems are concentrated in Functional Groups III and IV, while the northeastern region's greatest single problem lies in Functional Group III. In addition, the severity of writing problems differs from region to region. In particular, the performance of students in the west was inferior to the norm, and performance in the northeast was superior.

TABLE 13

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR SCORES ON THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY BY REGION

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 6)	.9115	13	.0701	n.s.
Regions/Western, Central, Southeastern, Northeastern	1.6020	3	.5357	.01
Residual	1.8404	39	.0472	
TOTAL		55		



MEAN %	31.1	42.0	47.7	76.4	42.8
GROUP MEANS	52.8	20.6	6.2	21.4	100.9
S.D.	25.1	11.7	3.2	6.6	32.0

Figure 4. Comparison of Mean Percent on National Student Survey by Region.

Institutional Responses

Findings reported in Table 14 are based on responses by regular students from seven institutions, the writer's institution being included among these. The items to which the students responded are as indicated in Table 14. The table shows the number of correct responses by item and institution along with percentages. The questions are placed in four groups as in Table 12 with Questions 8 and 14 being omitted from the display for the same reasons as stated for Table 12.

According to Table 14, Institution H has the highest percentage of correst responses for Functional Groups I, II and IV, per tested category on the National Student Survey (Groups 1 through 4.) Institution E has the highest percentage of correct responses for Functional Group III.

As indicated by Figure 6, students scored highest on an overall basis in Functional Group II, with a mean score of 15.2. The next highest category was Group I with 14.9. The next groups, IV and III with 9.8 and 9.1, respectively, were considerably lower than the overall high.

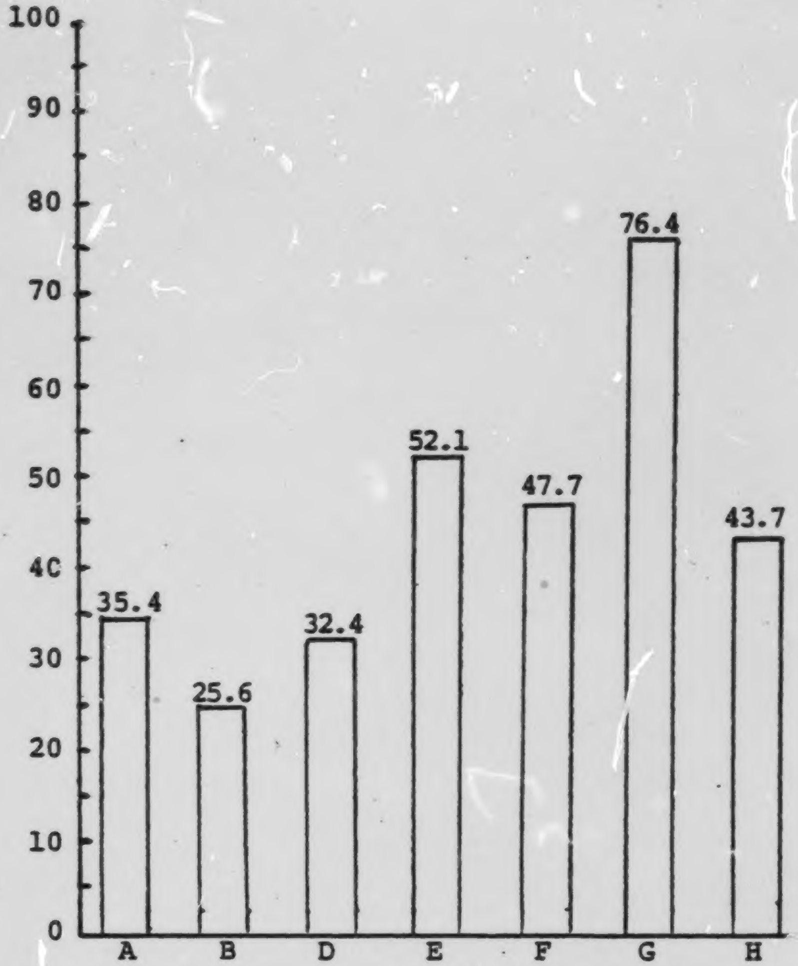
Among the institutional responses, Institution H has the highest overall mean performance of 76.4 percent. The next highest is Institution E with 52.1 percent. Institution F has a mean of 47.4 percent and Institution B scored worst with 25.6 overall. Institutions A and D have means of 35.4 and 32.4 percent, respectively.

A comparison of overall scores by the six institution is shown in Figure 5, and Figure 6 shows the difference in scores.

TABLE 14

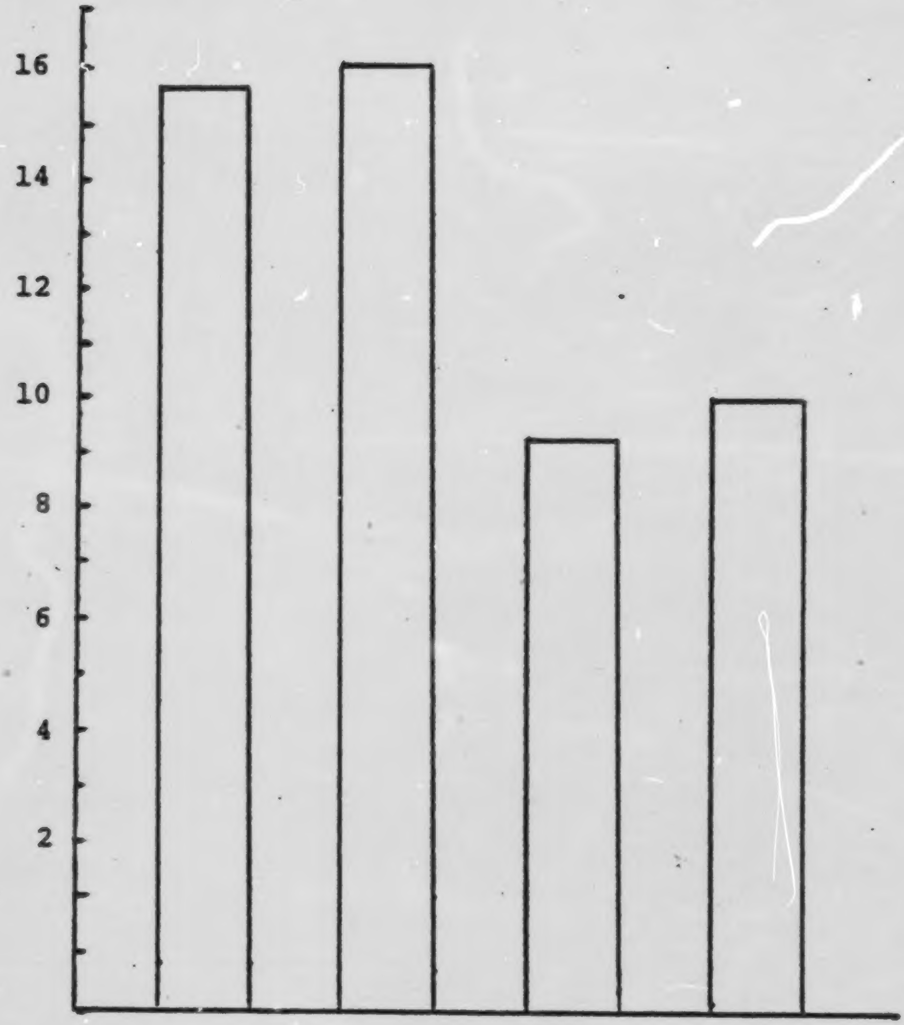
STUDENT COMPETENCY AS DEPICTED BY SCORES
ON THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY BY INSTITUTION
SHOWING REGIONAL NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES FOR REGULAR STUDENTS

Functional Groups	Institutions													
Items	A N=54		B N=25		D N=25		E N=24		F N=13		H N=28		Totals N=172	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
GROUP I														
Essay Definition	35	64.8	6	24.0	1	4.0	1	4.2	3	23.1	27	96.4	73	42.4
Knowlege of Thesis	35	64.8	7	28.0	2	8.0	0	0	12	92.3	27	96.4	83	48.3
Actual Thesis Writing	39	72.2	13	52.0	17	70.8	17	70.8	8	61.5	19	67.9	113	65.7
TOTAL	109	67.2	(26)	(34.7)	(20	(26.7)	(18)	(25.0	(23)	(59.0)	(73)	(86.9)	(269)	52.[illegible]
Mean	36.3		8.7		6.7		6.0		7.7		24.3		14.9 Mean Score/Inst.	
GROUP II														
Sentence Fragment														
Recognition	30	55.6	7	28.0	17	68.0	12	50.0	8	61.5	25	89.3	99	57.6
Revision	15	27.8	6	24.0	16	64.0	17	70.8	7	53.8	27	96.4	88	51.2
Run-on Sentences	8	14.8	13	52.0	5	2.0	14	58.3	11	84.6	27	96.4	78	45.3
Agreement	28	51.9	8	32.0	18	72.0	10	41.7	9	69.2	27	96.4	100	58.1
TOTAL	81	37.6	(34)	(34.0)	(56)	(56.0)	(53)	(53.0)	(35)	(67.3)	(106)	(94.6)	365	53.1
Mean	20.3		8.5		14.0		13.3		8.8		26.5		15.2 Mean Score/Inst.	
GROUP III														
Imagery	7	13.0	3	12.0	11	44.0	24	100.0	5	38.5	18	54.3	68	39.5
Allusions	1	1.9	5	20.0	1	4.0	24	100.0	2	15.4	9	32.1	42	24.4
Transitional Expressions	7	13.0	4	16.0	3	12.0	24	100.0	4	30.8	11	39.3	53	30.8
TOTAL	15	27.9	(12)	(16.0)	(15)	(20.0)	(72)	(100.0)	(11)	(28.2)	(38)	(45.2)	163	31.6
Mean	5.0	9.3	4.0		5.0		24.0		3.7		12.7		9.1	
GROUP IV														
Outlining Use	32	59.3	7	28.0	9	36.0	3	12.5	8	61.5	28	100.0	87	50.6
Outlining: Topic vs. Sentence	6	11.1	4	16.0	5	2.0	1	4.2	4	30.8	22	78.6	42	24.4
Paragraph Development	0	0.0	4	16.0	0	0.0	24	100.0	3	23.1	13	46.4	44	25.6
Essay Conclusions	24	44.4	3	12.0	8	32.0	4	16.7	3	23.1	19	67.9	61	35.5
TOTAL	62	29.6	(18)	(18.0)	(22)	(22.0)	(32)	(33.4)	(18)	(34.6)	(82)	(73.2)	234	34.0
Mean	16.0		4.5		5.5		8.0		4.5		21.0		9.8	
TOTAL	267		90		113		175		87		299		1031	
MEAN	19.1	35.4	6.4	25.6	8.1	32.4	12.5	52.1	6.2	47.7	21.4	76.4	73.6	42.8
S.D.	13.6		3.2		6.6		9.5		3.2		6.6			



MEAN %	35.4	25.6	32.4	52.1	47.7	76.4	43.7
GROUP MEAN	46.4	6.4	8.1	12.5	6.2	21.4	100.9
S.D.	23.0	3.2	6.6	9.5	3.2	6.6	

Figure 5. Comparison of Mean Percent by Six Institutions on the National Student Survey.



GROUPS	I	II	III	IV
Mean Score	14.9	15.2	9.1	9.8

Figure 6. Comparison of Mean Scores Among the Functional Groups of the National Student Survey for Six Institutions.

Importance. The analysis of variance for scores broken down by institution and functional groups indicates both these factors are significant at the .01 level (Table 13). Inspection of Figure 6 indicates that performance on Functional Groups I and II is relatively much stronger, and performance on Group III was the weakest. Figure 5 indicates a large difference between institutions, the students at Institution H doing quite a bit better than the others (see Table 15).

Support of Hypothesis. These findings have bearing on Hypothesis Two. Particular institutions appear to be very strong in particular areas of writing ability. For example, students from Institution E scored perfectly in Functional Group III but did very poorly in Functional Group I, while students at Institution H scored nearly perfectly in Functional Group II and much worse in Functional Group III.

Responses by a Remedial Group

Findings reported in Table 16 are based on responses by sixty-two students from the Western Region.

Description. The students responded to items as listed in Table 16. The table shows the number of correct responses for one institution, Western Region, remedial, in percentages and number.

Importance. Table 16 presents the data from one institution (A), broken down by functional groups. The analysis of variance (Table 17) shows variation both between functional

TABLE 15

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR SCORES ON THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY BY INSTITUTION

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 14)	1.1606	13	.0893	1.336	ns
Institutions: A, B, D, E, F, and H	2.5450	5	.5090	7.615	.01
Residual	4.3449	65	.0668		
Error	______	83			
TOTAL	8.0505				

TABLE 16

STUDENT COMPETENCY AS DEPICTED BY SCORES ON THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY BY ONE INSTITUTION, REMEDIAL

	Institution A N = 62	
Items	Number	Percentage
GROUP I:		
Essay Definition	37	59.6
Knowledge of Thesis	40	65.1
Actual Thesis Writing	38	61.2
TOTAL	(115)	(61.7)
MEAN	38.3	
GROUP II:		
Sentence Fragment		
Recognition	39	63.0
Revision	35	56.4
Run-on Sentences	41	66.0
Agreement	33	53.2
TOTAL	(148)	(59.7)
MEAN	37.0	
GROUP III:		
Imagery	3	53.2
Allusions	34	55.3
Transitions	34	55.3
TOTAL	(101)	(54.4)
MEAN	33.7	
GROUP IV:		
Outlining		
Use	7	11.2
Topic vs. Sentence	4	6.4
Paragraph Development	4	6.4
Essay Conclusions	3	5.3
TOTAL	(18)	(7.3)
MEAN	4.5	
TOTAL	382	
MEAN	27.3	44.1

TABLE 17

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE BETWEEN INSTITUTION A REMEDIAL AND A REGULAR ON THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 16)	8507.49	13	654.42	6.29	.01
Institution A: Regular, Remedial	2622.91	1	2622.91	25.21	.01
Residual	1352.57	13	104.04		
TOTAL	12482.97	27			

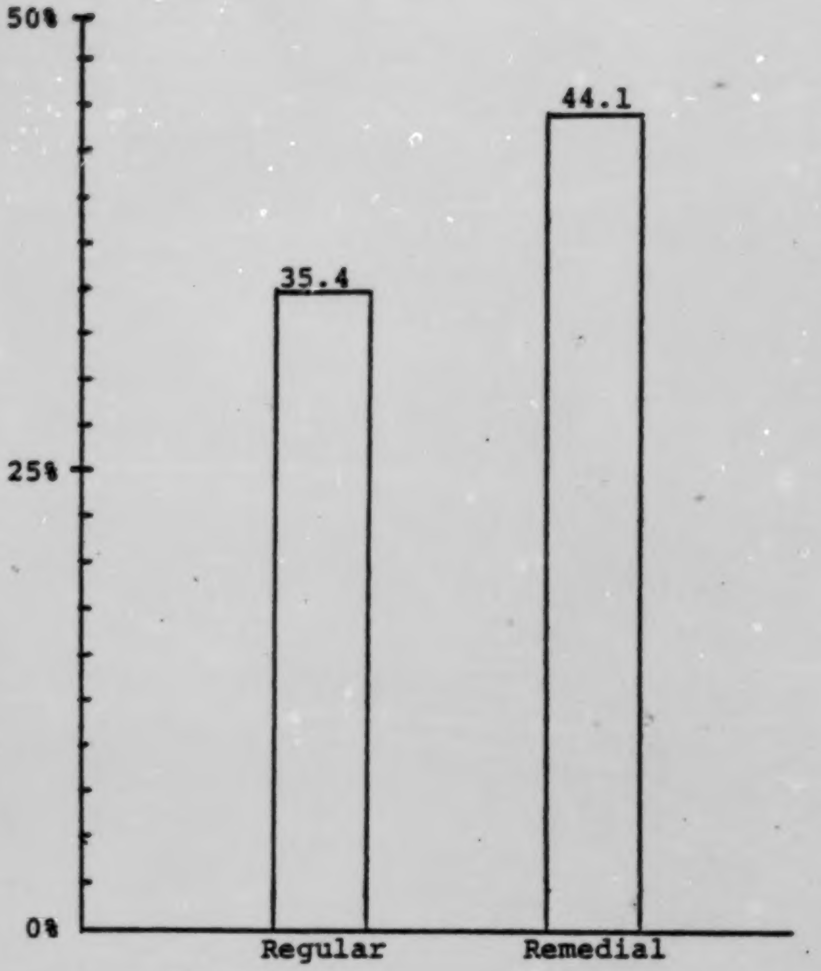
groups and between regular and remedial students to be significant at the .01 level. The remedial students scored 8.7 percentage points better overall (Figure 7). When the differences are analyzed by functional group (Figure 8), one can see the difference between regular and remedial students is most pronounced in the Functional Groups III and IV, and minimized in Group I.

Support of Hypothesis. No item of the hypotheses addresses itself directly to the remedial-regular differences.

Human Element Responses

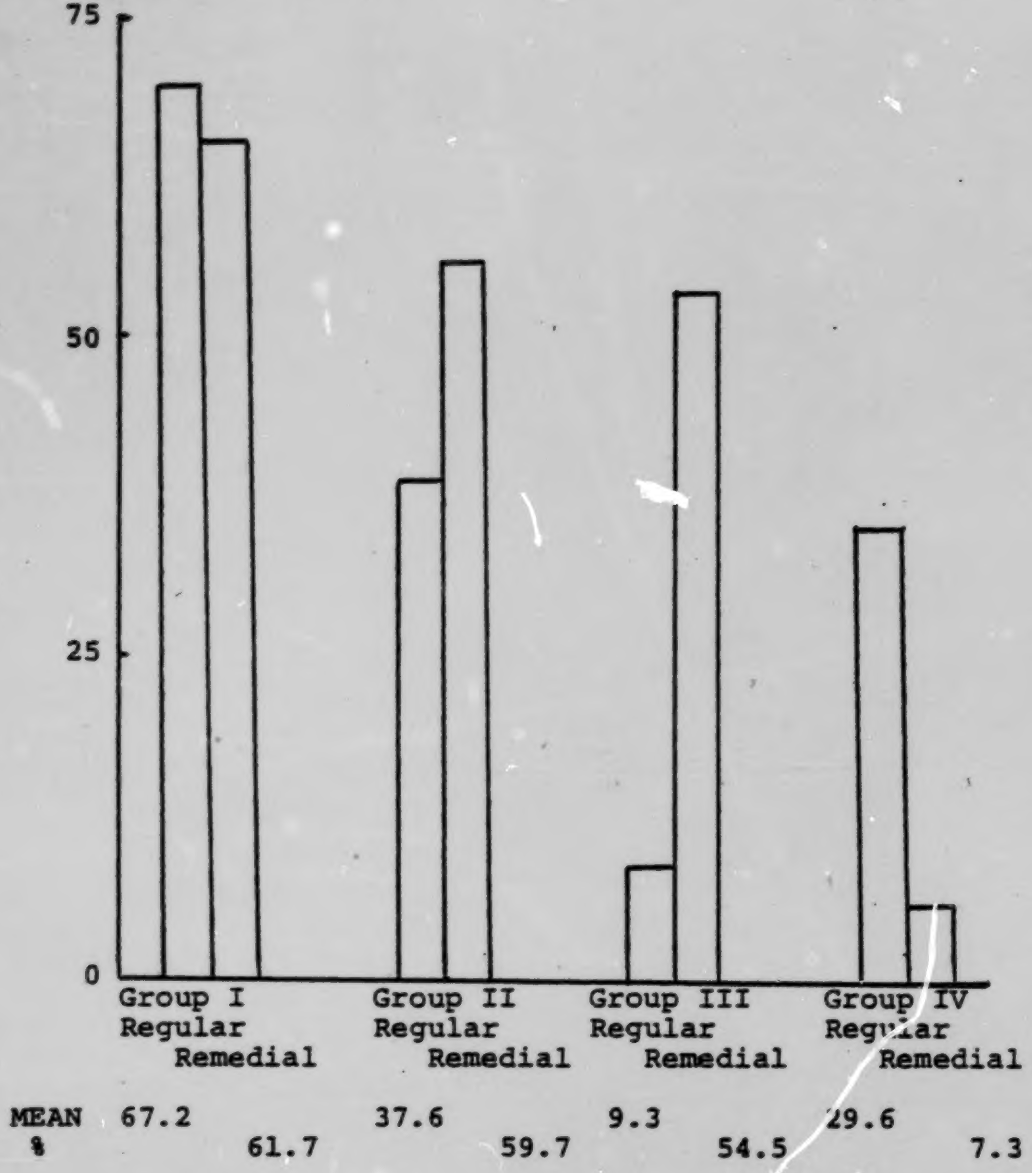
Findings reported in Table 18 are based on student responses to placement of blame for their writing inadequacies. Responses from 135 students were grouped under categories as depicted in Table 18. The table shows the number and percentage of responses in each category. Details of responses are given in Conclusions.

An exceptionally high percentage of students (63) gave responses that were categorized as impunitive, revealing that most students have a recognition of writing problems but do not assign blame. By comparison, a very low percentage of students (14.8 percent) blamed instructors for their writing failures. Close in percentage but still very low by comparison to the impunitive category was a group of students (by 12.6 percent) who accept blame for their own writing problems. A very low percentage of students (9.6 percent) blame writing inadequacies on course offerings failure (see Figure 9).



	Regular	Remedial
MEAN %	35.4	44.1
S.D.	23.0	

Figure 7. Comparison of Regular versus Remedial Mean Scores on the National Student Survey for Institution A.



SOURCE: Data taken from Tables 14 and 16.

Figure 8. Comparison of Scores Among Tested Categories on the National Student Survey--Regular versus Remedial for for Institution A.

TABLE 18

ANALYSIS OF THE HUMAN ASPECT INVOLVED IN STUDENT PLACEMENT OF BLAME FOR WRITING INADEQUACIES AS REVEALED BY THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

Student Acceptance of Blame		Instructor Failure		Course Offerings Failures		Impunitive	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
17	12.6	20	14.8	13	9.6	85	63.0

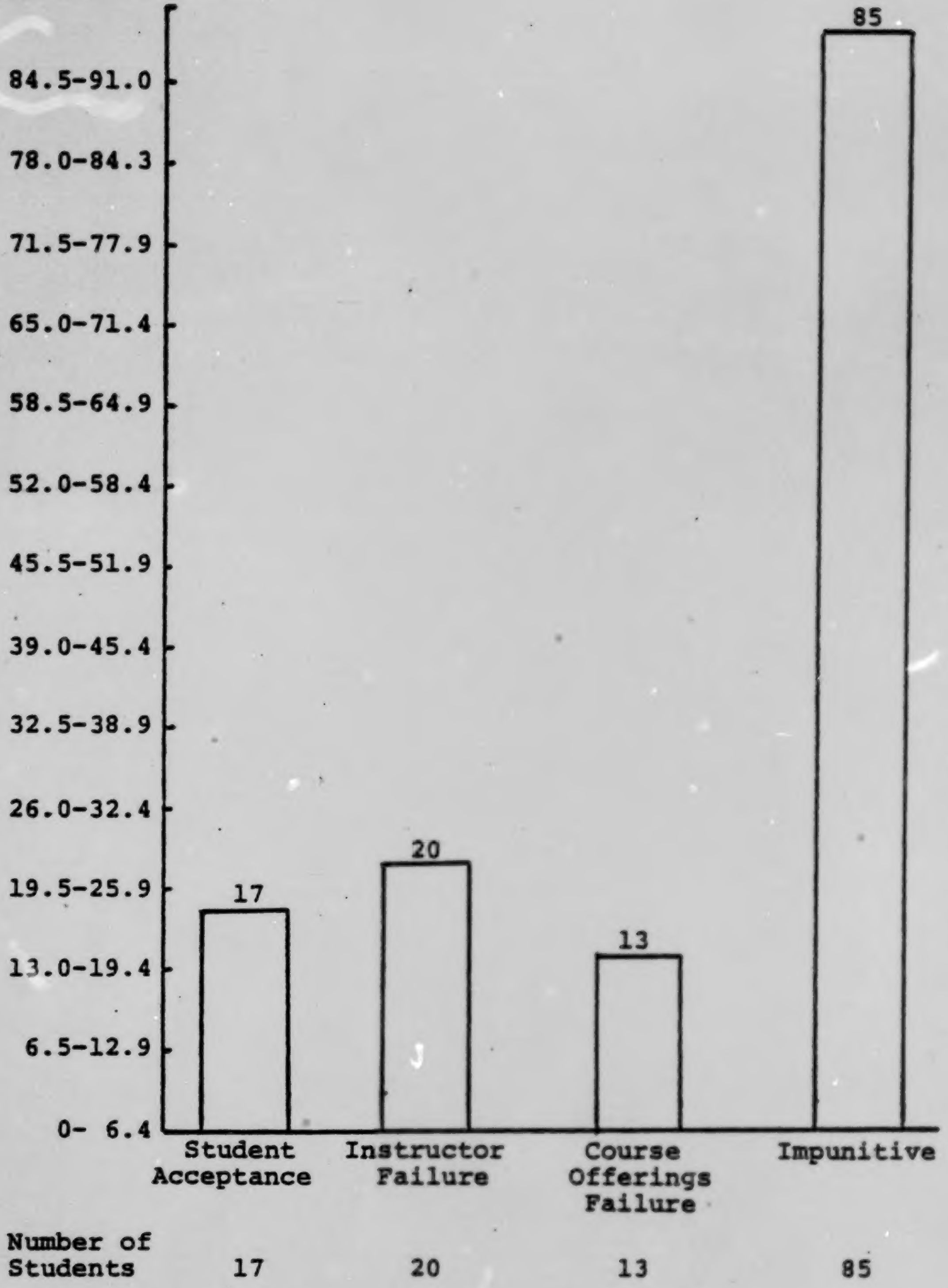


Figure 9. Student Punitiveness with Regard to Writing Inadequacies as Revealed on the National Student Survey.

As depicted in Table 18 there were many more responses than expected under the impunitive category and many fewer responses under the other three headings. A chi-square test shows a highly unequal placement of blame among the four categories, contrary to expectations (see Table 19).

Grammar Diagnostic

Institutional Responses--Regular

Findings reported in Table 20 are based on correct responses by students classified as regular in four institutions. The writer's institution was included.

Description. Table 20 depicts the number of regular students involved in the Grammar Diagnostic per institution, the compentency of the students per functional group and the percentages.

Importance. In the area of parts of speech, Institution H had the highest percentage of correct responses (84.8 percent). For the same functional group, Institution C had the next highest percentage correct by 81.4 percent. These two institutions are considerably higher with correct responses than Institution A with 62.7 percent and Instituion D (65 percent) correct. In spelling, Institution C has the highest percent correct (79.5) whereas Institution H has 69 percent. Close to the performance of Institution H in spelling is Institution D with 64.5 percent. The institution with the lowest percentage correct in spelling is Institution A with

TABLE 19

CHI SQUARE TEST FOR SIGNIFICANCE OF DEFICIENCIES RELATIVE TO STUDENT PLACEMENT OF BLAME FOR WRITING INADEQUACIES

N = 135	Student Acceptance N = 17	Instructor Failure N = 20	Course Offerings N = 13	Impunitive (No Blame) N = 85
Obtained Percentage	12.5	14.8	9.5	63.0
Expected Percentage	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0

X^2 = 104.49 (significant at .001 level)

TABLE 20

STUDENT COMPETENCY IN TERMS OF FUNCTIONAL GROUPING OF SCORES FOR FOUR* INSTITUTIONS IN GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTICS REGULAR STUDENTS

Functional Groups	A N = 59		C N = 39		D N = 63		H N = 28		Total N = 189	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parts of Speech (4 possible)	148	62.7	127	81.4	164	65.0	95	84.8	534	70.6
Spelling (3 possible)	97	54.8	93	79.5	122	64.5	58	69.0	370	65.3
Pronouns (3 possible)	124	70.0	97	82.9	138	73.0	60	71.4	419	73.9
Subjects and Verbs (6 possible)	140	39.5	189	80.8	241	63.7	137	81.5	707	62.3
Modifiers (3 possible)	66	55.9	70	92.1	83	65.8	44	78.5	263	69.6
Agreement (3 possible)	99	55.9	92	78.6	97	51.3	70	83.3	358	63.1
Verb Forms (3 possible)	77	43.5	55	47.0	74	39.2	34	40.4	240	42.3
TOTAL	751	53.2	723	77.2	919	60.8	498	74.0	2891	63.7
Group Mean	107		103		131		71		413	
Group S.D.	31.1		44.0		57.0		34.9		162.0	

* Table 20 shows only four institutions because of insufficient data from other institutions. Students were examined and categorized Regular and Remedial. Table 19 shows results for Remedial category.

54.8 percent. In choosing correct pronouns, Institution C had the greatest percentage correct (82.9) with the other three Institutions A, D, and H reflecting scores very close to one another of 70, 73 and 71.4 percent, respectively. With regard to subjects and verbs, Institutions C and H vie with highs of 80.8 and 81.5 percent, respectively. Institution D had correct responses to subject and verbs by 63.7 percent. Responding at a considerably lower percentage was Institution A with 39.5 percent. In the area of modifiers, Institution C had an exceptionally high number of correct responses by 92.1 percent. Institution H had a lower percentage by 78.5 percent. Close in scores but with considerably less than Institution C were Institutions A and D with 55.9 and 65.8 respectively. In the area of agreement, Institution H had a very high percentage of correct responses by 83.3 with Institution C not too much lower with 78.6 percent. The two lowest percentages were in responses from Institutions A and D with 55.9 and 51.3, respectively. In the area of verb forms, all four institutions had a very low percentage of correct responses. In this low, Institution C scored highest by 47 percent, Institution A with 43.5 percent, Institution H next with 40.4 percent, and the lowest percentage was 39.2 from Institution D.

Overall, the institutions had the highest percentage of correct responses to pronouns by 73.9. Very close by 70.6 percent correct were responses to parts of speech. Next lower by percentages were the institutions' correct responses in the areas of modifiers and spelling with 69.6 and 65.3 percent. Further down on the scale in comparison to percentage performance in the other areas were agreement by 63.1 percent, subjects and verbs by 62.3 percent and verb forms performance with a low of 42.3 percent.

Among institutions, the table depicts Institution C as having the highest percentage of overall correct responses to all areas (as depicted in Table 20). Institution H is next in correct responses with a close overall 74 percent. Relatively close is Institution D with an overall 60.8 percent correct response and lowest is Institution A with an overall 53.2 percent correct responses. Table 21 shows the level of significance as .01. Figure 10 depicts comparison of scores for four institutions. Figure 11 depicts comparison of scores per category.

Institutional Responses--Remedial

Findings reported in Table 22 are based on correct responses by students classified as remedial in two institutions.

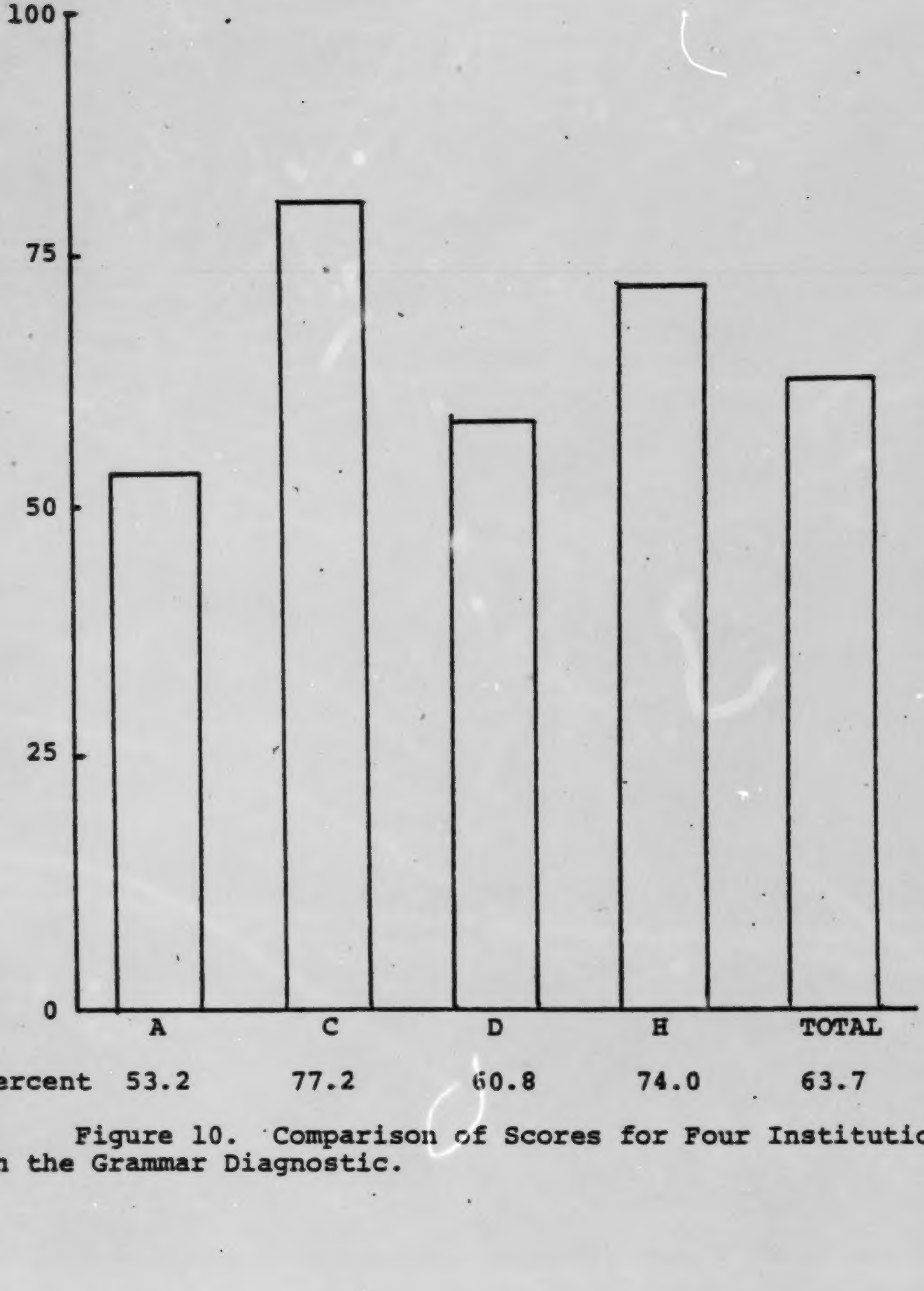
Descriptive. Table 22 depicts the number of remedial students involved in the Grammar Diagnostic per institution, the competency of the students per functional group, and the percentages.

Importance. Table 22 is similar to Table 20, but presents data for remedial students in two institutions only.

TABLE 21

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 20)	39,603.70	6	6,600.61	22.98	.01
Institutions A, C, D, H	12,832.00	3	4,277.34	14.89	.01
Residual	5,169.28	18	287.18		
TOTAL	57,604.98	27			



Percent 53.2 77.2 60.8 74.0 63.7

Figure 10. Comparison of Scores for Four Institutions on the Grammar Diagnostic.

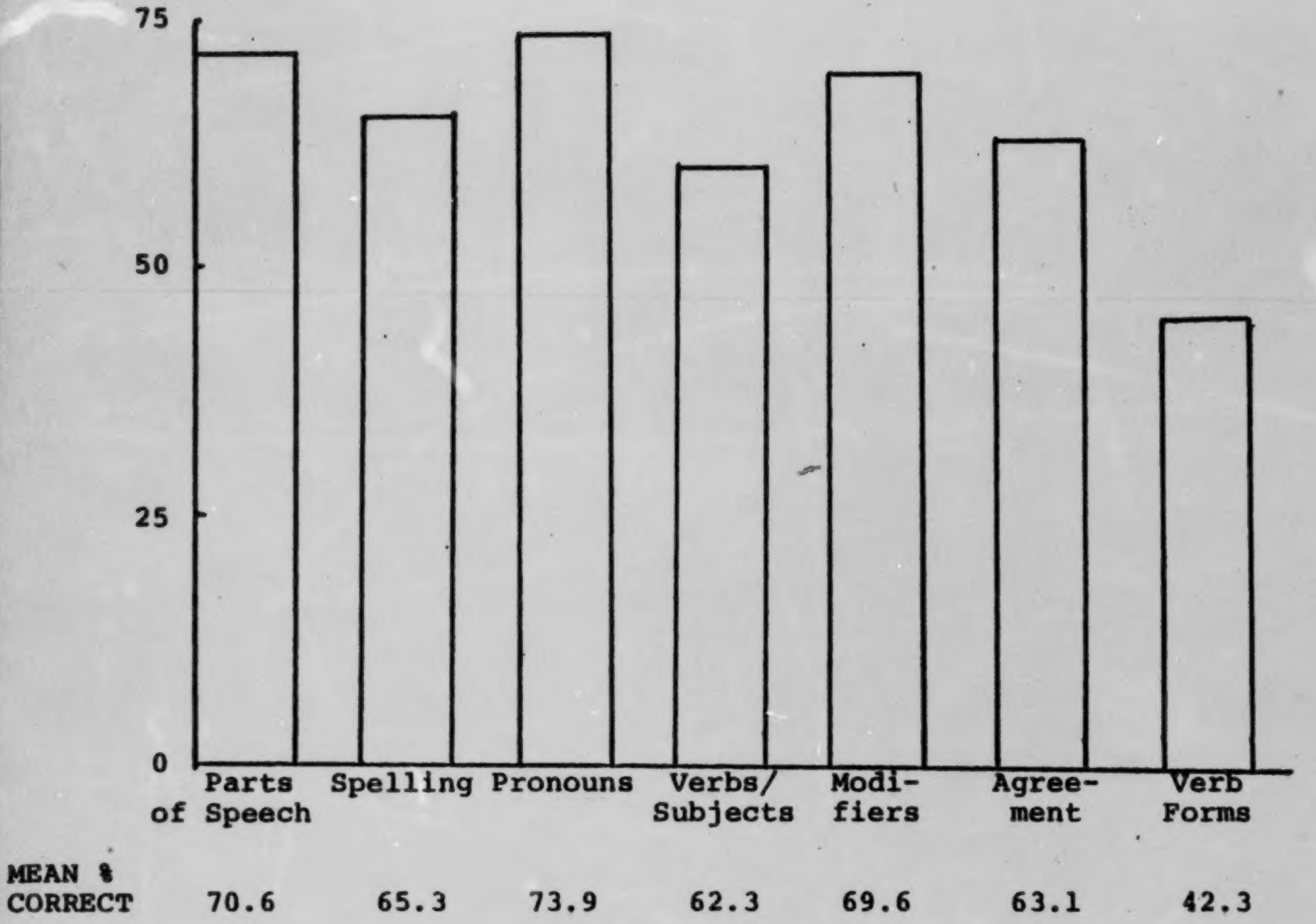


Figure 11. Comparison of Scores per Category on the Grammar Diagnostic for Four Institutions.

TABLE 22

FUNCTIONAL GROUPING OF SCORES ON GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC FOR REMEDIAL GROUPS AT TWO INSTITUTIONS

	INSTITUTIONS					
	A N = 62		D N = 16		TOTAL N = 78	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parts of Speech	58	23.4	26	40.6	84	27.0
Subjects and Verbs	58	15.6	51	53.0	109	23.3
Modifiers	70	56.5	10	31.3	80	51.3
Agreement	49	26.3	10	21.0	59	25.0
Pronouns	13	7.0	25	52.1	38	16.2
Verb Forms	84	45.0	17	35.4	101	43.0
Spelling	89	48.0	25	52.1	114	48.7
TOTALS	421	28.3	164	42.7	585	31.3
MEAN	60.14		23.43		83.57	
STANDARD DEVIATION	25.35		13.99		30.46	

NOTE: Remedial groups completed data for only two institutions.

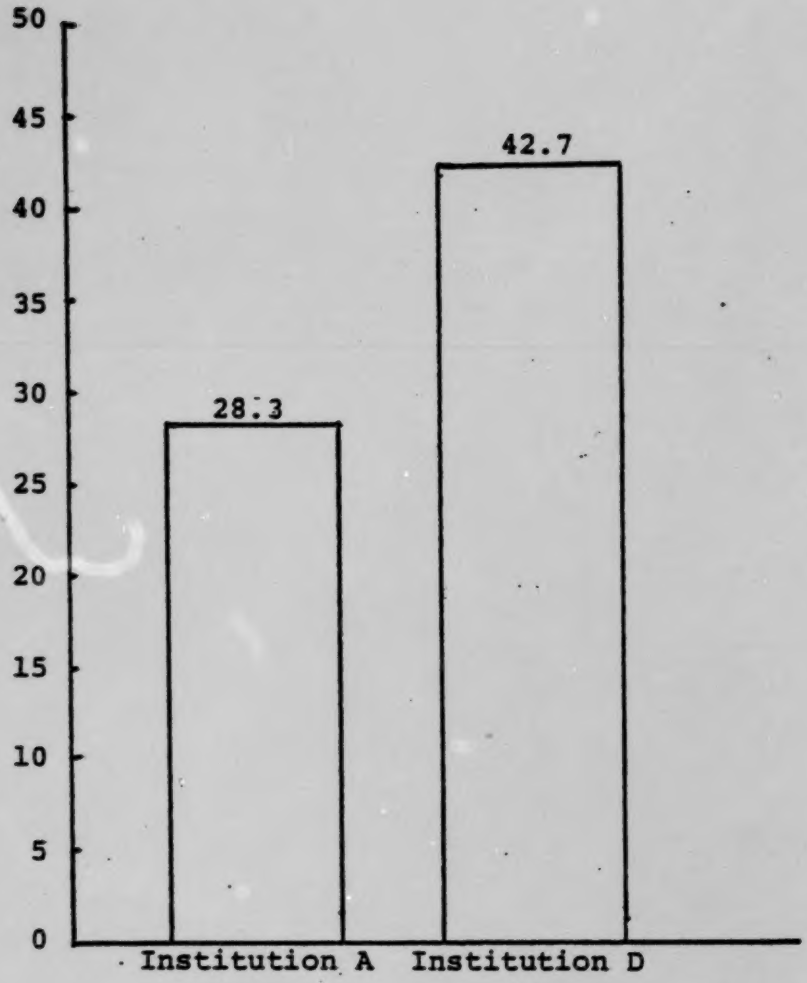
The remedial students scored higher for Institution D than A (Figure 12); D scored higher than A in both regular and remedial. Students did twice as well (51.3 percent) on modifiers as on pronouns (24.4 percent), subjects and verbs (23.3 percent) or agreement (25.0 percent). Table 23 shows the level of significance among functional groups as not significant, but there is .05 level of significance between Institutions A and D. Figure 12 depicts the comparison of mean percentages between the two remedial groups.

Functional Group Scores--Remedial and Regular

Findings reported in Table 24 are based on mean scores for each of the Functional Groups in the Grammar Diagnostic.

Description. Table 24 depicts the number of Regular and Remedial students, mean scores per Functional Group, significance and standard deviation.

Importance. There is a significant difference in the mean scores between remedial groups at Institutions A and D as revealed by Table 24. Significantly more effective in the presentation of a remediation program is Institution D with a mean percent 42.7 as compared to 28.3 for Institution A. Among the functional groups there is not a significant difference but overall there is a difference at the .05 level between the remedial groups and the normal groups (Table 25). Table 26 reveals no significant difference between functional groups and the difference between regular versus remedial at



TOTAL	421	164
MEAN	60.14	23.43
S.D.	25.35	13.99
MEAN %	28.3	2.7

Figure 12. Comparison of Mean Percentages for Two Remedial Groups on the Grammar Diagnostic.

TABLE 23

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TWO REMEDIAL GROUPS ON SCORES FOR GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 22)	2,284.87	6	380.81	.833	n.s.
Institutions (A and D)	4,717.77	1	4,717.77	10.317	.05
Residual	2,743.72	6	457.29		
TOTAL	9,746.36	13			

TABLE 24

COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES FOR EACH OF FUNCTIONAL GROUP IN THE GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC BETWEEN REMEDIAL AND REGULAR STUDENTS

	Institution A		Institution D		Total Remedial	
	N = 59	N = 62	N =63	N = 16	# vs.	Total
Functional Groups	Reg. No.	Rem. No.	Reg. No.	Rem. No.	Reg. No.	Rem. No.
Parts of Speech	148	58	164	26	312	84
Subjects and Verbs	140	58	241	51	381	109
Modifiers	66	70	83	10	149	80
Agreement	99	49	97	10	196	59
Promouns	124	13	138	25	262	38
Verb Forms	77	84	74	17	151	101
Spelling	97	89	122	25	219	114
TOTAL	751	421	919	164	1670	585
Mean	107	60	131	23.4	238	83.5
Mean %	53.2	28.3	60.8	42.7	57.0	31.3
Standard Deviation	31	25.3	57.7	13.9	85.7	27.6

TABLE 25

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE REGULAR VERSUS REMEDIAL AT INSTITUTION _A_ ON THE GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC

Source	Sum Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 24)	2,549.91	6	424.99	.36	n.s.
Regular vs. Remedial Institution A	7,778.71	1	7,778.71	6.57	.05
Residual	7,108.30	6	1,184.72		
TOTAL	17,436.92	13			

TABLE 26

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE REGULAR VERSUS REMEDIAL AT INSTITUTION D ON THE GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 24)	15,182.70	6	2,530.45	2.52	n.s.
Regular vs. Remedial, Institution D	40,716.20	1	40,716.20	40.59	.01
Residual	6,018.33	6	1,003.05		
TOTAL	61,917.23	13			

Institution D is significant at the .01 level. Table 27 shows that there is no significant difference among the functional groups' total regular versus total remedial on the grammar diagnostic. Figure 13 compares mean percent for regular versus remedial.

The mean of the regular group at Institution A is significantly different from the remedial mean of 60 at Institution A at the level of .05.

With regard to Institution D, the mean of the regular group (131) is significantly different from the remedial mean of 23.4 at the same institution at the .01 level on an overall basis.

A two-way analysis of variance of totals between regular and remedial scores at two institutions reveals no significant differences in scores among the functional groups but there is a significance at the .01 level on an overall basis.

Composition Diagnostic

Institutional Responses--Regular Students

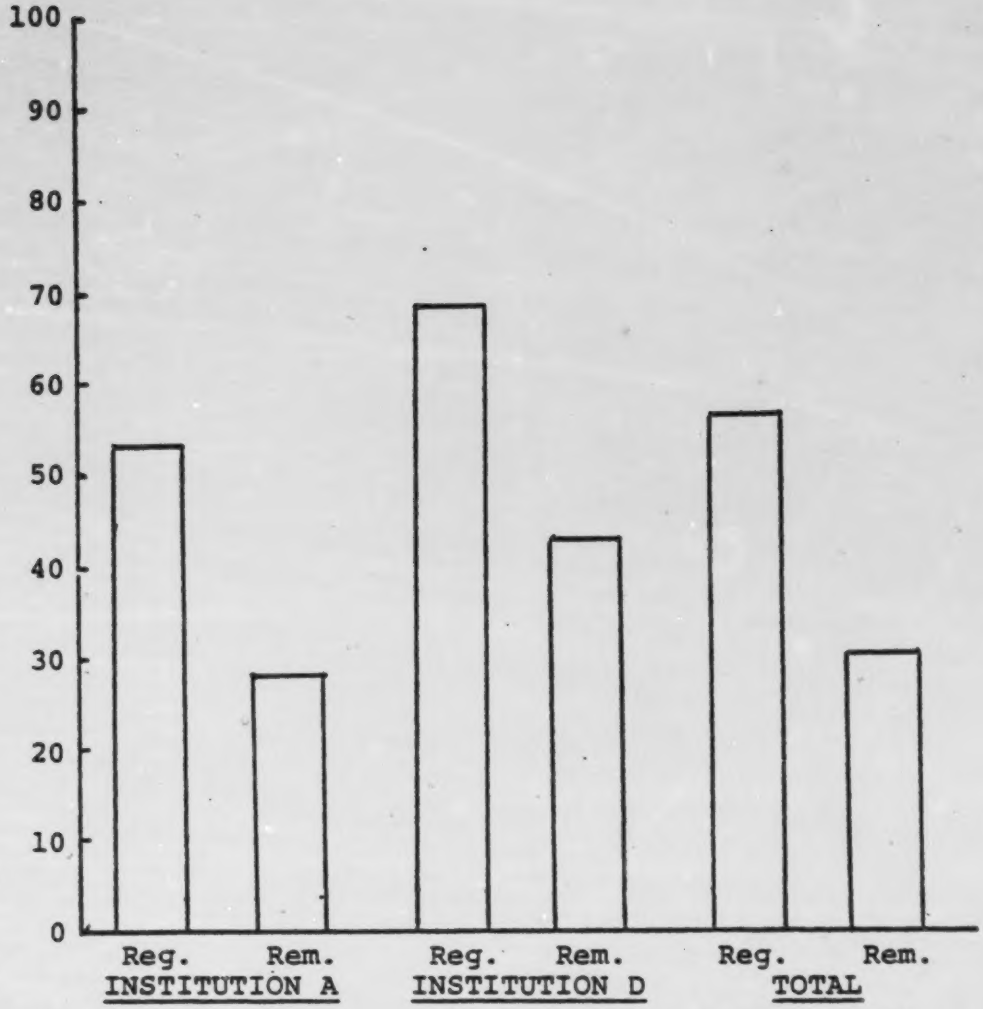
Findings reported in Table 28 are based on error types made by regular students at four institutions.

Description. Table 28 depicts the number of regular students at four institutions involved in the Composition Diagnostic as well as the number of errors per functional grouping. The functional grouping is as depicted in Table 28.

TABLE 27

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TOTAL REGULAR VERSUS TOTAL REMEDIAL ON THE GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 24)	26,172.10	6	4,362.02	1.16	n.s.
Regular versus Remedial	84,088.00	1	84,088.00	22.41	.01
Residual	22,551.30	6	3,751.89		
TOTAL	132,771.40	13			



	Reg.	Rem.	Reg.	Rem.	Reg.	Rem.
TOTAL	751	421	919	164	1570	585
MEAN	107	60.0	131	23.4	238	83.5
S.D.	31.0	25.3	57.7	13.9	85.7	27.6
MEAN %	53.2	28.3	60.8	42.7	57.0	31.3

Figure 13. Comparison of Mean Percent for Regular versus Remedial on the Grammar Diagnostic.

TABLE 28

COMPETENCY OF STUDENTS AS DEPICTED BY ERROR TYPES IN COMPOSITION DIAGNOSTIC FOR FOUR INSTITUTIONS - REGULAR STUDENTS

ERROR TYPES	Institution									
	A N = 65		C N = 39		D N = 40		H N = 28		TOTAL N = 172	
	Total Number	Errors/ Student	Total Number	Errors/ Student	Total Number	Errors/ Student	Total Number	Errors/ Student	Total Number	Errors/ Student
Spelling	88	1.35	5	.07	8	0.20	14	0.50	115	0.67
Sentence Fragment	38	.58	4	.10	15	0.37	6	0.21	63	0.36
Run-on Sentences	26	.40	1	.02	1	0.10	3	0.07	31	0.14
Agreement	14	.21	5	.07	4	0.10	2	0.07	25	0.14
Parallelism	3	.04	1	.02	0	0.00	4	0.14	8	0.04
Wrong Word	44	.67	9	.23	10	0.25	7	0.25	70	0.41
Sentence Structure	14	.21	1	.02	7	0.17	7	0.25	29	0.16
TOTAL	227	3.49	26	0.53	45	1.01	43	1.52	341	1.94
S.D.	28.4		2.9		5.3		3.9		36.5	

NOTE: Table 28 gives results for four institutions because of insufficient data from other institutions surveyed.

Importance. Table 28 depicts the types of composition errors made by students, divided by institution. Types of errors were not a significant source of variance, but institution was (f less than .01, Table 29). Institution A's students made significantly more errors than students of any other institution. This finding bears on my second hypothesis, since among these institutions, A has the only open admissions policy. Figure 14 depicts a comparison of total errors per student.

Error Types

Findings in Table 30 are based on error types made by one institution, remedial students on the Composition Diagnostic. The table depicts the number and percentage of errors per category, the mean and total scores, and the standard deviation.

Importance

According to Table 30, the greatest number of errors in composition by remedial groups were in the category of word usage showing 92 errors. Very close to this number of errors in word usage were 71 errors in spelling. A considerably lower number of errors were made with run-on sentences by 46 errors. Still far below the number of errors made with run-on sentences were errors with sentence structure which are represented in Table 30 by 25 errors. Error types in agreement including subject-verb and pronoun/antecedent agreement were represented by 20. A decidedly lower number of errors were

TABLE 29

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SCORES ON THE COMPOSITION DIAGNOSTIC FOR FOUR INSTITUTIONS REGULAR VERSUS REGULAR

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 28)	1,993.36	6	332.23	1.89	n.s.
Four Institutions (A, C, D, H)	3,858.40	3	1,286.13	7.33	.01
Residual	3,160.35	18	175.58		
TOTAL	9,012.11	27			

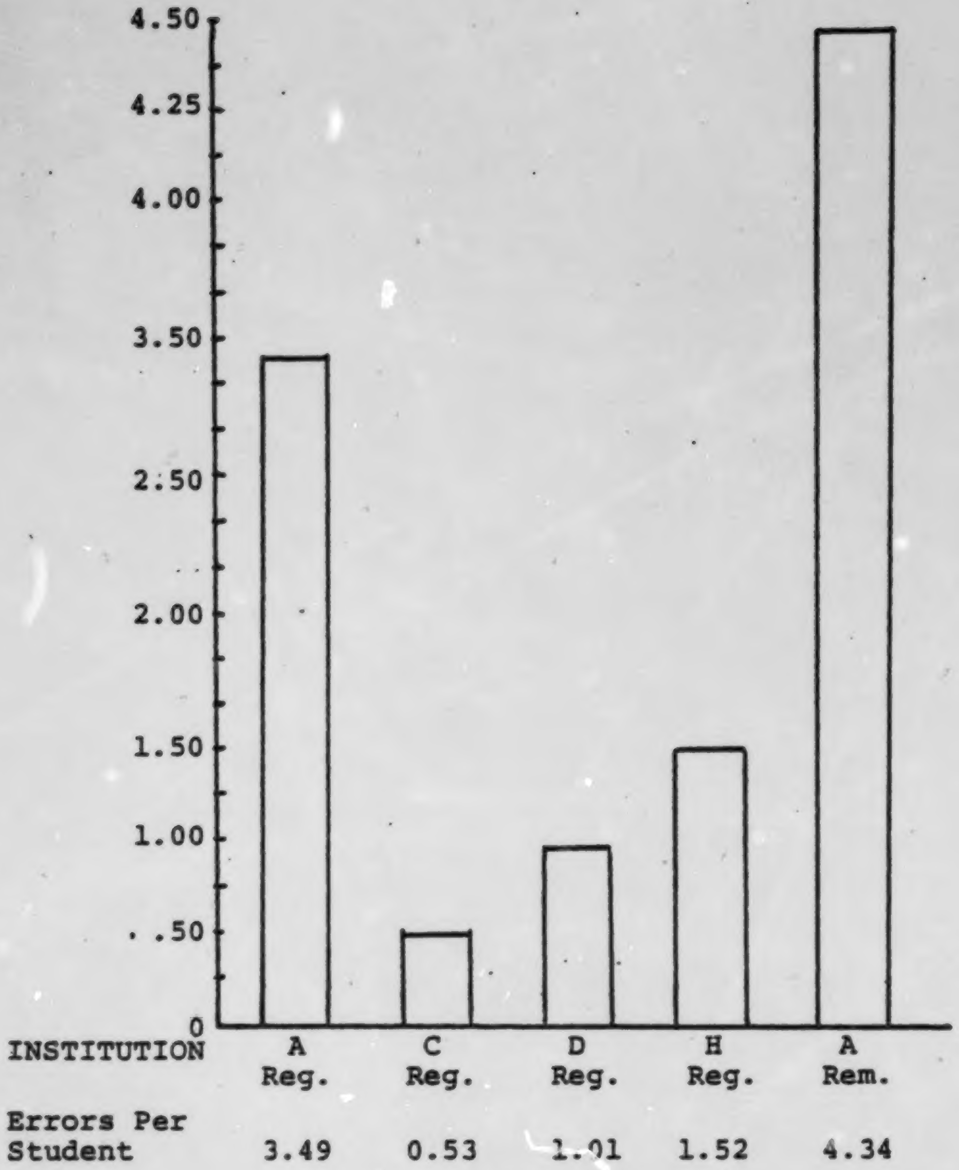


Figure 14. Comparison of Total Errors per Student on the Composition Diagnostic by Regular and Remedial Students.

TABLE 30

ERROR TYPES IN COMPOSITION DIAGNOSTIC
FOR ONE INSTITUTION
REMEDIAL

Institution A
N = 62

Error Types	No.	Errors per Student
Spelling	71	1.15
Sentence Fragment	5	.08
Run-on Sentences	46	.74
Agreement	20	.32
Parallelism	10	.16
Wrong Word	92	1.48
Sentence Structure	25	.40
TOTAL	269	4.34
Mean	38.4	
S.D.	32.7	

made in the area of parallelism with ten errors and in the area of sentence fragments there were five errors. The analysis of variance for error types broken down by a single institution (remedial) and by regular versus remedial indicates that these factors are not significant (Tables 31 and 32).

TABLE 31

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE REMEDIAL VERSUS REGULAR ON COMPOSITION DIAGNOSTIC FOR INSTITUTION A

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 30)	457.14	1	457.14	.34	n.s.
Institution A	2,872.41	6	478.74	.36	n.s.
Residual	8,069.86	6	1,344.98		
TOTAL	11,399.41	13			

TABLE 32

TWO-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE REMEDICAL VERSUS REGULAR TOTAL ON COMPOSITION DIAGNOSTIC FOR INSTITUTION A

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Level of Significance
Functional Groups (Rows, Table 28)	604.57	1	604.57	.54	n.s.
Institution A	7,435.45	6	1,239.24	1.10	n.s.
Residual	6,737.45	6	1,122.91		
TOTAL	14,777.47	13			

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, conclusions and recommendations for further study and implementation of new approaches were made. It may be remembered that the purpose of this study was to determine the regional extent of the syndrome of writing inadequacy among students in first-year college and university composition classes, to identify and categorize errors, to determine what instructors of English as well as students feel about first-year composition inadequacies and to prove a profile of the composition errors.

From the data in Chapter IV, it can be stated that student writing problems were widespread, that instructors of college English had specific, far-reaching opinions with regard to student readiness for writing that were of momentous consequence for all concerned.

Instructor Survey:
Conclusions

Conclusions with regard to the Instructor Survery were as follows:

1. Students needed to be specifically prepared for subject matter of college assignments. There could be no assumptions made that they were mentally ready for this merely

by enrolling in the freshman class

2. Writing assignments that were long dealt primarily with the rhetorical and literary subjects reaction

3. Argumentative writing and personal feelings exploration were the primary types of assignments for short papers

4. There was a high level of agreement among instructors of English regarding writing problems of first-year students

5. Instructor responses to the survey revealed motivation efforts by means of types of assignments given that have students explore their innermost feelings, but these responses did not reveal the teacher's role in developing student writing readiness, instructor responsibility acceptance or human insight beyond providing a situation for human reaction by the student

6. An analysis of instructors' opinions could lead to and understanding of aspects of weakness in student writing

National Student Survey

The following were conclusions with regard to the National Student Survey:

1. It would be more productive, in some instances, to direct remedial programs to geographical areas rather than direct programs to development of functional grouping areas

2. Institution H scored much better than Institutions B and D (see Figure 5 for regular students). However, sample sizes were quite different for the different groups, and

further investigation is warranted to determine if these differences were due to sampling error, instrinsic differences in the student body, or differences in teaching methods

3. The emphasis of remedial programs should be on functional group IV (see Figure 8)

4. In that regular students were more variable in their scores from one functional group to another, instruction should be geared to all functional groups in essay writing principles. Figure 6 shows, however, that, in general, functional groups III and again group IV need the most work

5. There were definite differences in institutional performance. Institution H performed best (see Figure 5)

6. There were differences in regional performance (see Figure 4)

National Student Survey: The Human Element

The writer analyzed responses to questions seventeen and eighteen of the National Student Survey for those things deemed elements of the human aspect such as frailty admission, the direct or indirect expression of personal values, and emotions, such as anger, fear disappointment or elation.

Admitted inadequacies in writing and attributable causes of the writing problems that students had shed light to the point of providing for all instructors whether on the secondary or college level a path to follow to insure writing success.

Perhaps the most intriguing comments from students were those which did not represent the regular, ordinary or expected response. One such comment, when thoughtfully considered, was at once an indictment, not of the student but of the immediate society of educators in the field of English, for in responding to a question pertaining to identification of writing inadequacies, the student said, "No one likes the way I express myself," and this statement being followed by a request to indicate the attributable cause revealed a response which was "Don't know." The indictment appeared to be loud and clear, for a state of negativism or lack of positive reinforcement had prevailed to promote a zero self-worth image. The statement almost said, "Nobody likes me," for the work, the attempted essay is a part of the student's self; the work is his offspring. It said, "This is me; approve of me." Here was a response which had as its implication for educators more classroom effort which would lead to positive images and perhaps fewer red marks on returned papers. Here it appeared that the majority of papers turned in by the student had met with disapproval, perhaps capriciously so sometimes. Indicated was an individual out on a lonely writing pinnacle, wishing perhaps that even one person would respond with a positive comment and accept the person for being himself.

One student indicated that hereditary factors were the cause of his writing inadequacies. This appears as the greatest societal indictment of all when a person feels within himself that writing problems are inherited. The probability was that the student felt plagued with the problems, felt the unshakeable albatross, felt, worst of all, no way out, no hope.

Examination of student responses also showed that some students attributed their writing inadequacies to lack of effort on their own part to improve. Their statements revealed a new, positive attitude for personal growth and development. "Now is different" was a statement used by a student to indicate recognition of the problem in self and need for change. Study of the human aspect revealed the regret and sorrow that students felt because they have not really been exposed to writing principles or had not had the opportunity to use them enough. Some students recognized human failure in another individual and cited teaching quality as the reason. There seems to have been some student awareness of instructor evasion as far as fundamental grammar and compositional techniques are concerned.

It seems that when the writing problem was thought to be self-caused, the students generally admitted to this with such items as lack of experience, knowledge and lack of imagination. They said of themselves that they were not creative. One student, in recognition of failures, admitted to difficulty in writing as a result of vocabulary limited by his social life and environment while another indicated that he was always able to avoid anything having to do with essay writing principles as delineated on the survey sheet. Several students candidly admitted that they never realized the importance of an education or never paid attention in high school.

The following was concluded:

1. Students were not inclined to blame instructors for their writing problems

2. Students readily acknowledged their own inadequacies

3. Instructors needed to recognize the importance of student self-worth and adjust instruction and evaluations accordingly

4. Teachers might have been, to a great extent, held culpable for student writing inadequacies

5. Students' responses to the survey revealed the "bare bones reality" of their problems

Grammar Diagnostic

1. Since both categories of grammar diagnostics and institutions were significant, they warrant further inspection with regard to emphasis for programs designed to improve basic English skills

2. Instruction in modifiers, agreement, verb forms and spelling should be stressed, more than the other categories (see Figure 11)

3. Further analysis should be made of inter-institution differences to determine if one institution has a stronger instructional program or if the higher scores are due to differences in admission procedures or sampling error

4. There were major differences within the functional groups (see Table 20)

5. The remedial students performed poorly in the overall

diagnostic, but within their level they perform better than was perhaps expected (see Figure 13)

6. As in the National Survey, there were significant differences in the performance of institutions (see Figure 11). This might have been due to instructional program, admissions procedure or to some other factor

7. Remedial students at Institution D performed better than students at Institution A (see Figure 13). This was perhaps due to heightened emphasis on remediation at Institute D

8. Instructors could save a great deal of time by emphasizing the weakest areas

9. Curriculum guides in universities needed to be articulated more carefully

Composition Diagnostic

Conclusions for the composition diagnostic were as follows:

1. There was much inter-subject variability in types of composition errors (see Table 28)

2. Relative differences in number of error types must be viewed with caution since the data was not normalized to take into account widely variable "opportunities for error"

3. The differences in institution error rates could have been attributable to a variety of factors, including testing procedures and admission procedures (see Figure 14)

4. There was no significant difference in performance with the functional group

5. Instructors need to stress spelling, word usage, and sentence fragments (see Table 28)

6. There were significant difference in institutional performance

7. Curriculum guides in universities needed to be articulated more carefully

The various surveys had direct bearing on the hypotheses stated previously. Specifically, Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be a high level of agreement among instructors of English regarding writing problems of first-year students. In general, the surveys bear this out; however, significant trends can also be noted. The Instructor Survey indicates that students have major weaknesses in composition writing in the area of thesis writing and agreement (Table 11). Paragraph division and word usage are also indicated as major problems. With regard to writing readiness, students are least ready to perform satisfactorily in the areas of rhetorical skills and composition organization and design (Table 10).

Hypothesis 2 surmised that the range of error types among regions and institutions in knowledge of essay principles, composition and grammar would be extensive. With regard to the knowledge of essay principles which have been used in the survey to represent the gamut of writing elements that should be known, responses evidenced a considerable lack of knowledge in all functional groups (Table 12). The National Student Survey indicated that students in every region had the greatest number of writing problems in

Functional Groups 3 and 4. These groups dealt primarily with the use of imagery, allusions and general organization of essays.

The Grammar Diagnostic indicates that regardless of region students' worst problems were with verb forms (Table 20). On the Grammar Diagnostic, remedial students at Institution D (Table 22) were weakest in "agreement" although most regular students were not as weak in this area.

The Composition Diagnostic points up spelling, word usage, and sentence fragments as the worst problem areas (Table 28). These findings indicated the need for a common nationwide approach to student writing problems with emphasis on the above areas. On the Composition Diagnostic, remedial students at Institution A (Table 29) were weakest in word usage; regular students were weak in this area as well, although spelling was a greater problem among regular students. This shows that teachers have a good knowledge of their students' areas of major weakness.

Other trends may be noted as well. Institution H, from the Northeast Region, scored consistently better on the student surveys than most other institutions, except on the Composition Diagnostic. Institution C scored best in the two surveys--Grammar Diagnostic and Composition Diagnostic--in which it was included.

The data also compared remedial students with regular students at the same institutions. The National Student Survey showed that in Institution A there was surprisingly little difference between the performance of regular and remedial students. However, on the Grammar Diagnostic regular students out-performed remedial students at both Institutions A and D; on the Composition Diagnostic, regular students at Institution A again did better than remedial students at the same institution. This indicates that in addition to general organizational problems shared by all types of students, students in remedial classes need special emphasis on specific grammatical and compositional problems. The superior performance of remedial students in some categories of the National Student Survey may indicate that their major difficulty often is putting knowledge in practice. This further emphasizes the importance of composition writing in teaching the principles of English.

Hypothesis 3 proposed the idea that student responses to the identification of and cause for their writing inadequacies would reveal that which might be called the "bare-bones reality" of their writing problems. This hypothesis is supported by the results of the survey. In the student responses to the human element of the National Student Survey, the trend was greatest in the impunitive category (Table 18). One may conclude that there is honesty in this kind of revelation which lends further credence to the other categories of blame and their percentage representation.

Hypothesis 4 asserted that a profile of composition errors would be obtained through the survey. This hypothesis is supported by the results of the National Student Survey

(Tables 12 and 14); the Grammar Diagnostic (Tables 20 and 22); and the Composition Diagnostic (Tables 28 and 30).

Hypothesis 6 reflected the idea that instructor responses would reveal the heavy trend toward assignments involving the critical analysis of literary works. Whereas this does not hold true for short assignments, it does hold true for long writing assignments (Table 9). It is interesting to note that short writing assignments reflect greater emphasis on argumentative writing (Table 8).

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the following is recommended for the various segments of learning that have to do with writing in freshman composition classes:

Because college instructors give the highest percentage of short writing assignments in the areas of argumentative and personal feelings exploration (Table 8), it is recommended that early emphasis training at the twelfth grade level be placed on these two areas. The fact that this study has shown that all students do not do measurably well in composition writing justifies a shifting of teaching emphasis.

In that literary subjects reaction commands a high 32.4 percent of long assignments (Table 9), it is recommended that there be additional emphasis on the reading of a great variety of good quality literary works in order that students will have a greater exposure to good literature and will thus become used to stylistics which so many instructors say are missing. The nature of paragraphing and composition organization, it is felt, will be discerned by students through this additional reading emphasis.

For rhetorical skills improvement which the study reveals as the area in which the students are least ready to perform (Table 10), it is recommended that instructors stress these in such a way that they are used as immediately applicable elements in writing rather than as isolated rote elements.

Knowledge of the thesis which represents greatest writing weaknesses by 13.1 percent as shown in Table 11 needs to be dwelt upon for a much longer period in the classroom than it is presently. It is the opinion of the investigator based partly on experience in teaching the course and partly on the findings of the study that not enough time apparently is spent on this writing element. Agreement errors appearing by a close 10.1 percent as shown in Table 11 deserve emphasis. Although there are many rules to be learned in the areas of agreement, it is recommended that rules memorization be urged upon the students whereas maybe this has not been stressed before since for a while memorization became passé.

Since the student responses from the Northeastern Region were highest by region and by institution on knowledge of essay writing principles, it is recommended that methods of teaching used in the areas be studied closely in order that other regions and institutions might follow more successful methods.

In that students overall performed better in Functional

Groups I and II (Figure 6) of the National Student Survey, it is suggested that Functional Groups III and IV involving stylistics and organization receive added attention. It is the writer's contention that a single college semester is often too brief a period in which to develop stylistics as well as organization emphasis; thus courses could be restructured to offer more classroom hours to allow for this exposure.

Also on the basis of the findings, remedial groups need more than one full semester of remedial work, for the number of errors made in quite significant areas of writing are quite high. This is reflected in Table 28.

There is little cognizance taken of the human student as revealed by the human element response to the National Student Survey. Results of the questionnaire section pertaining to the element suggest the desirability of closer instructor scrutiny of students' problems and more active involvement in seeing the student as a whole person, functioning not only in the classroom but also in the outside world beset with pressure conflicts on the student. Recommended is a required course in human relations geared to student needs and feelings. The fact that 63.0 percent of the students surveyed provided responses in the impunitive category (Table 18) could be in part an indication that students are as much in a quandary as to whom to blame as teachers are.

Recommended on the basis of the findings for functional groups on the Grammar Diagnostic for regular students are courses which stress extensive remediation in verb forms, and since one can say virtually nothing without a verb, as much immediate composition application as possible should be in order. Such a low figure as 42.3 percent total according to Table 20 would account for writing struggles and lack of clarity in so many compositions would indeed account for the writing that so many instructors describe as that which is written on hope and vagueness. Remedial groups at open admission institutions such as Institution A definitely need the A and B phases of an English Review course as revealed in Table 22.

With regard to improving competency in the writing of compositions, the writer recommends that Institution A set up a special study group to revamp current practices in composition instruction. Wrong words and fragments should receive priority emphasis in instruction. In that the Composition Diagnostic for one institution remedial group revealed major errors in spelling and word usage, these two areas should figure importantly in curriculum revision.

It is felt by the writer on the basis of teaching experience as well as research that the intellectual and more complicated disciplines, when correctly taught, could equip students to come out of the mire of writing mediocrity, that with regard to students, there should be, as Guth feels, an "urban renewal of the mind"[58] and that a practical way to improve writing skills is to give students a chance and a challenge to be published, read, and recognized. With these ideas in mind, it is recommended that the following should be made a part of all English curricula: a real-world avenue for student expression in writing through publication, more precise peer writing models for motivation, strong values incorporation in all composition courses, heightened emphasis on class discussion in one required semester of grammar instruction followed by two semesters of composition for all first-year students.

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[58] Guth, "Three Faces of Rhetoric," p. 5.

Students should be given regular opportunities and motivation to have their works published as a means of improving composition errors. The idea of publication of classroom works by students as a means of improving first-year composition errors is shared by another writer, Ronal Kayser, who stated:

> It's being said in this Bicentennial Year that our educational system is spawning a generation of semi-literate young Americans who don't read and can't write. It is further alleged that the 1960's brought a shift away from the teaching of expository writing, and that even where writing is still taught the creative approach discourages insistence on grammar, structure and style, in the belief that rules stifle spontaneity. My own experience tells me, "Not so."
>
> As a professional writing consultant with QUEST from its 1959 beginning to this present issue, I have read thousands upon thousands of student manuscripts, and during the past seventeen years met hundreds after hundreds of junior and senior high school students in classroom workshops. I know their enthusiasm, their talent, and their earnest response to serious criticism. (QUEST does not consider that insisting upon good grammar, structure and style discourages creativity, any more than good teeth discourage chewing one's food.) The QUEST program has been deemed exemplary, and this honor is owing to the excelling efforts put forth by the magazine's young contributors. Just as people talk to be heard, writers write to be read, and the practical way to improve the

writing skills of students is by providing them the chance and challenge of being published, read and recognized.[59]

This is very obviously a challenge to be taken up and implemented as soon as practicable in all first-year composition classes. If this means that all first-year courses should become writing labs where grammatical principles are taught, where compositions are worked on earnestly with the one main end result being publication, then so be it. The practice of devoting the first-year of freshman composition to total literary analysis should be suspended until statistics reveal greater all-around writing strengths by more college composition students throughout the United States.

Writing Assignments on the College Level

Students should be given, upon entering college, a packet of material which includes successfully written sample essays by their peers. These should be read aloud and discussed when preliminaries of class orientation are over. The packet should include sample essay assignments from the areas most frequently used as a basis for essay writing situations by college and university instructors throughout the United States. Accompanying these models for writing, there should be several sheets which indicate what the most common writing errors are in an effort to make students aware of composition pitfalls. It is further recommended that a printed sheet which defines as precisely as possible essay writing principles be included. This printed sheet should later be referred to and explained in detail to the class.

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[59] Ronal Kayser, Foreword to Quest Magazine, June 1976, p. ii.

The writer would also suggest the use of some of the ideas expressed by Ralph H. Turner in "Dithering Devices in the Classroom: How to Succeed in Shaking Up a Campus by eally Trying." Granted, there are limitations to the use of dithering devices in the classroom, but a well-planned program might be set up to stimulate more discussion. Turner feels that:

> The potential for communication between members of a large class and between students and faculty members of different disciplines is great, and it could be argued that, unless this potential is realized, a considerable educational resource has been wasted. While it would undoubtedly be more correct to refer to this failure by using terms such as lethargy and indifference, rather than friction, the fact remains that the latent potential that resides in a collection of parts called apparatus, and in a collection of persons called groups may be brought out by a shaking procedure which activates processes which were previously dormant.[60]

It is with this same sort of thinking in mind that the writer suggests as Turner has suggested that lectures be specifically set up to motivate students to talk, think and prepare arguments for the next class session. Lectures which purposefully dither or stimulate should be given. Following Turner's method, comments or questions would be allowed on the day of the lecture, but the second day would be open for discussion and comment.

Turner reports that Watson and Freud took such extreme and uncompromising positions on so many subjects that individuals who heard their pronouncements in shocked disbelief were galvanized into activity; and then of Robert Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, Turner said:

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[60] Ralph H. Turner, "Dithering Devices in the Classroom: How to Succeed in Shaking Up a Campus by Really Trying," American Psychologist 21 (October 1966):957.

> I think I now understand what Hutchins was doing. His approach was such that it shook students and faculty out of their lethargy and welded them into a community of discussion that lasted long after he had left the campus.[61]

In this writer's opinion, this kind of action is needed for a more effective beginning in bridging the learning readiness gap which exists in college composition classes.

Once an approach with emphasis on philosophy is taken during a lengthy orientation period, one may turn more to the specific requirements that must be met in order to establish the readiness necessary for success with college English. The present fault and cause for the high mortality rate on college compositions may hinge on the word expect. The twelfth grade teacher expects the student to have learned certain things in the eleventh grade; the college teacher expects the student to be ready to handle college English assignments, to be able to write a paper free of run-on's and fragments, expects him to take a single aspect of a topic and write at length in a scholarly manner upon any given subject when the student enrolls in his class. An instructor who bases instruction on the expected soon experiences academic shock when he learns that the student indeed is not ready. It would seem that each grade level realizes the enormity of the gap and the lack of time to bridge it, but still goes on with the expectation that somewhere and at some time the needs will be met by someone.

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[61] Ibid., p. 958.

A great deal of practice is needed with the essay-type question. In this instance, the instructor must spend time making up questions that challenge, fit the given situation, stimulate thinking and call for orderly thought and development.

William Hanchett advises in "Essay Examinations: A Plea and a Plan" that "questions should be written so that the student has an argument to make, an hypothesis to prove or disprove, a conflict (and let it be one he did not expect!) to resolve. . . ."[62] Once the instructor has planned the essay questions, then it is important that the student should plan before he writes. Too many students feel compelled to start right in on the question without any pre-planning whatsoever and just as many are part of the high mortality rate which accompanies such haste. Instant outlines will help in this case, or if one has the facility of organizing mentally, this will help. In an effort to put something down on paper, students often try the "snow job." And for this Hanchett said:

> The fourth rule for students is that they must answer the question the instructor asks, not one related to it. . . . Failure to answer the question is sometimes the result of carelessness and haste. At other times it is subterfuge undertaken by a student not literate in the subject. . . . He takes a different approach and hopes for the best . . . perhaps he will tell all he knows about the general subject, hoping that by saturating the

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[62] William Hanchett, "Essay Examinations: A Plea and a Plan," San Diego State University (no date). (Mimeographed.)

> target area he will manage to hit the target as well . . . .[63]

Very specifically, grammatical principles should be taught by knowledgable instructors who are aware of the place of values in the classroom as they teach these grammatical principles. There is no place for vague, imprecise explanations of grammatical points by instructors who are unsure of the points themselves. It is good to praise students and develop their strengths in self-expression as long as the grammar foundation for clearest expression is provided by the instructor. Every English instructor should be an English major, an expert in the teaching of grammar and composition and should be required to demonstrate competency in written tests as well as classroom practice on a regular basis.

It is to be remembered that testing an instructor's knowledge is not enough. If students are to be sufficiently motivated to write well, the instructor must feel love for the subject matter and must be more sensitive to students as human beings whose every moment in their classroom must be made a valuable learning experience. Instructors of composition should have values training. Those who are presently teaching should be required to complete one full course in values and a refresher methods course. Prospective teachers of English should be required to take two methods courses in the teaching of English. Extended exposure to teaching methods would help instructors who now present aspects of writing in a fashion that does not communicate the method of writing to the students.

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[63] Ibid.

Essay writing principles, as has been previously stated in this paper and reemphasized here, which are vague elements for a college student should be defined, for it is apparent that many of the terms aren't known let alone developed in student compositions. Instructor assumptions about student knowledge of essay writing principles must end, and taking the place of that which may be spoken of as "knee-jerk presentation" should be precision instructor input.

To facilitate implementation of new teaching methods whether by the practicing or prospective English instructor, there should be no more than four classes for each instructor once instruction begins in order to free the instructor for needed planning and extra student consultation.

For those large colleges and universities where there is the possibility of having one hundred or more sections of English, it is recommended that the sections not be taught by assistants unless these assistants first pass a rigorous written grammar examination and demonstrate, in writing, knowledge of essay writing principles as well as mastery of writing to the extent that they provide, under examination conditions, a paper excellent in nature. Being a candidate for an advanced degree should not be used as the single basis for assigning a person as an assistant teacher of composition students on any educational level.

In instances where there is a need for additional sections of English and qualified assistants are not available, only bona fide instructor-developed taped lectures should be used.

Texts used by the instructors and students should rely heavily on student peer writing models. These models should be representative of the six major literary genres and should include the research paper example. This emphasis on texts with writing models by student peers is recommended for the necessary identity factor, the motivational stimulus, the need to show students that they can be published also if they persist in writing endeavors.

It is recommended that assignments concerning compositions written by students be designed with real-world experiences and values in mind in an effort to extend any healthy characteristics and fresh idioms presently appearing in their compositions. It is further recommended that motivation by instructors not be given up as a thing belonging to the senior level of high school but that it is essential on the college level as a part of the conscious effort to improve student competency.

Not presenting writing specifics to students in the best light is to ignore that which one knows is lacking, the presentation of specific guidelines for performance along desired lines. With this thought in mind and with the idea of avoiding old habits of looking through the "rear-view window" or passing the buck or expecting the students to be completely prepared once they are enrolled in classes, the writer firmly believes that structured material, when properly presented by the instructor, will fill in the gap which prevents writing readiness for the college English class.

There should be clear, direct instruction for students so that they might write better essays. The writer recommends that all instruction be given with a tone of communication that is warm, interested and "all-knowing." This kind of tone would communicate to students the fact that the teacher knows the material, knows how to impart it and is interested that students also absorb the material and are made to grow by it mentally. With student confidence in the instructor, mastery of subject matter has a better chance. If instruction is imparted with love of subject matter, love and concern for students, a magic is communicated that leads to better writing.

Basic Instruction Involving the Human Element

For a total experience in the first year of composition, value-stress should be incorporated in teaching. Not only will this emphasize values, provide an "urban renewal of the mind," but it will revive an all important societal element, self-worth.

Assignment modification could very easily stimulate the type of desired composition writing in first-year college composition. A table from Composition for Personal Growth[64] sheds light on composition possibilities (see Table 33).

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[64] Hawley, Simon, and Britton, Personal Growth, p. 13.

As an additional aid, two other tables from the above source reveal an ordering of goals and principles of personal growth which are appropriate to composition writing (see Tables 34 and 35).

Hawley, et al., have indicated that there is a pressing number of choices facing students, taxing decision ability, but it is their feeling that personal growth goals through composition will help one to compose his inner self, to find out who he is, to grow by the sharing of experience with others, to discover what he values, and to learn how to make his life reflect his values.

Further examples of this close tie-in that may be made of values in composition assignments appear in Clarifying Values Through Subject Matter:

> Value Clarifying Discussions:
>
> Conduct a panel discussion or debate concerning the question of whether drilling for oil under water should be continued in certain areas. Also discuss placing oil pipelines above ground as some oil companies propose in Alaska. Consider the viewpoints of the oil companies, ecologists, local citizens, and government officials.
>
> Discuss Ogden Nash's poem "Song of the Open Road." Did the poet really mean that he'd never see a tree as long as billboards are there? If he were a businessman who depended upon the tourists who saw the sign, would he feel the same way? Write a poem of your own about the environment.[65]
>
> Values level (based on Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken").
>
> Write a poem on how you feel about making decisions. What images can you use other than a road?[66]

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[65] Simon Kirschenbaum, Clarifying Values Through Subject Matter--Applications for the Classroom (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1973), pp. 133-34.

[66] Ibid., p. 45.

TABLE 33

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS FOSTERED BY THE PERSONAL GROWTH APPROACH TO COMPOSITION

Observing:	The pattern of wind in a puddle; a TV announcer with the sound off; how others react to your new clothes.
Comparing:	Food prices in suburbs and ghetto; the philosophy of your school and its rules; your and other people's reaction to a news item.
Classifying:	Colleges; way of spending Sunday afternoons; things you love to do.
Reporting:	Events at a football game;impressions of a trip to a foreign neighborhood; feelings of joy, anger, pity.
Discovering:	How to adjust a carburetor; why teenagers smoke; a new way to deal with your sister.
Evaluating:	Newspaper columnists; teachers' comments about your work; a friend's praise.
Summarizing:	The Israeli position in the Mid-East; the best things about school; your goals and aspirations five, ten, fifteen years ahead.
Analyzing Data:	The "facts" on drugs; the positions of ten friends on smoking; your rank orders
Creating:	A new song; a way to evaluate students without marks; a new way to learn about yourself.
Criticizing:	The way textbooks deal with black history; the latest limitation rock group; the draft system.
Checking Assumptions:	Behind the grading system; behind the involvement in Southeast Asia; behind your self-image.
Defining Words:	Such as "radical," "peace with honor," "hero," "under-achiever," "teaching," "learning," "lazy."

SOURCE: Hawley, Robert C., Simon, Sidney B., and Britton, David D. Composition for Personal Growth - Values Clarification Through Writing. (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1973) pp. 157-158.

TABLE 34

A RANK ORDERING OF GOALS IN TEACHING COMPOSITION

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1. To confirm to students that their perceptions are worthy of attention.

2. To help students process their perceptions into words, phrases, sentences, and longer sequences in order to clarify their thoughts and feelings, heighten their self-awareness and personal effectiveness.

3. To show that writing, a tool for extending the power of one's ears and voice, increases one's control over his environment and over his own growth and destiny.

4. To help students gain access to large bodies of assorted data, facts, images, statistics, quotations, etc.

5. To help students draw inferences from large bodies of data.

6. To help master specific skills for communicating their perceptions to others--skills of illustration, organization, emphasis, and comparison.

7. To help students develop precise, functional vocabularies.

8. To help students develop facility with complete sentence structure.

9. To help students master devises for gaining clarity, such as reference, parallelism, agreement, and punctuation.

10. To help students master such conventions as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

SOURCE: Hawley, Robert C., Simon, Sidney B., and Britton, David D. Composition for Personal Growth - Values Clarification Through Writing. (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1973), p. 20.

TABLE 35

PRINCIPLES OF THE PERSONAL GROWTH APPROACH TO COMPOSITION

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1. The reason for teaching composition is to help the student to know himself and his world.

2. Knowledge of self and world can be divided into three skill areas:

    a. Composing our inner selves to find out who we are (identity).

    b. Sharing experience, and growing by sharing with others (interpersonal relations).

    c. Discovering what we value, and implementing our values in our daily lives (values into action).

3. The act of composition requires a subject perceived as meaningful by the composer.

4. The act of composition requires a responsive audience.

5. Growth through composition is best achieved through descriptive feedback and response to that feedback.

6. Peer feedback is a rich (and usually untapped) resource in the developing of composition skills.

7. Teachers can best stimulate growth through composition in the following ways:

    a. By introducing, engaging and stimulating activities and materials and relevant information.

    b. By facilitating the group processes.

    c. By clarifying problems which the students have encountered but cannot solve alone.

    d. By offering additional feedback from a perspective which is experientially different from that of the student's peers.

SOURCE: Hawley, Robert C., Simon, Sidney B., and Britton, David D. Composition for Personal Growth - Values Clarification Through Writing (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1973), p. 21.

Grammar:

Punctuation

This section illustrates a method of combining a study of punctuation with a sharing of student activities, thoughts and feelings. Such sharing helps students become aware of themselves and others and aids them in making choices.

1. First, students are asked to work alone, completing sentences and punctuating them properly. Here are some sentence stems to work with:
   a. Three television programs I like are . . .
   b. On Saturday I love to . . .
   c. If I had a hundred dollars, I would . . .
   d. I'd like to say to my father . . .
2. Then, students might write their sentences on the chalkboard and answer questions about the punctuation and questions from the class referring to the meaning. Alternately, students might do this in groups of three or four, perhaps with each group selecting an example of punctuation used both properly and improperly to show the whole class.[67]

Values and Teaching advances the importance of value sheets. These sheets are based on the premise that:

> There are many things in our complex world that are worth getting clearer about, and the value sheet offers a strategy for bringing some of these to the attention of students in a non-threatening and stimulating way. This is consistent with the value theory because each student is faced with the issue and its alternatives, and each one is encouraged to make an intelligent choice freely and thoughtfully and to act in ways consistent with that choice. A value sheet in its simplest form consists of a provocative statement and a series of questions duplicated and distributed . . . .[68]

The statement which is provocative in nature is chosen for the implication it will have for students. Each question takes students through that which is called the value clarifying process. Once these responses are shared, there is decided mental, social, and moral growth.

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[67] Ibid., p. 48.

[68] Louis E. Raths, Merril Harmin, and Sidney B. Simon, Values and Teaching: Working with Values in the Classroom Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 83-84.

The writer favors the value sheets for the mental grappling that involves each student and they may be used by different instructors in various ways. It is noticeable that value lessons allow for the fullest range of opinions and avoid "loading the dice" in favor of any one point of view. In order for values to be clarified, "the instructor does not moralize, preach, indoctrinate, or inculcate."[69]

Issues that penetrate the lives of persons in our society are good for value sheets. The writers of Values and Teaching offer the following:

1. Selfishness vs. altruism
2. Sloppiness vs. neatness
3. Individual initiative vs. governmental controls
4. The role of advertising
5. Independence vs. dependence
6. Sexual promiscuity vs. abstinence
7. Acting on emotion vs. acting on intellect
8. Capitalism vs. socialism
9. Democracy, autocracy and anarchy
10. Wealth vs. pleasant life
11. Tardiness vs. promptness

Paragraphs identifying possible positions are written out; students study alternatives and write their own positions.[70]

Though the following value sheet is set forth for grades seven to twelve, it will serve as a model for value sheets for literature and composition on the college level.

Worksheet: Silas Marner by George Elliot

Chapter V

1. What is the focus of the narrative in this novel?

Chapter VI

1. What is the function of this chapter? How is it different from other chapters?[71]
2. Briefly characterize the major people you meet at the Rainbow. Discuss briefly.
3. Do you know any people who are similar to those at the Rainbow? Discuss briefly.
4. Consider the topics of conversation at the Rainbow. Do those topics persist to this day with the people you know? How much of your discussions involve these topics?

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[69] Ibid., p. 86. [70] Ibid., p. 95. [71] Ibid., p. 91.

5. How would you define gossip? Why do you think we gossip?
6. How much time do you spend in gossip in an average week?
7. What are some alternative ways of spending this time?
8. Compare the consequence of time spent in gossip to the consequences of time spent at the alternative you listed and make some judgment as to which consequences you would want for yourself.

Chapter VII

1. Consider Godfrey's statement about Dunstan, "He'll never be hurt--he's made to hurt others." Do you know of a person who could never be hurt? Is it possible to be that way, do you think?
2. Do people ever consciously hurt you? Can you explain this?
3. Do people ever unconsciously hurt you? Can you explain this?
4. Can you think of something you can do to help persons understand what they are doing when they are hurting you and how they might cease this kind of behavior?
5. Will you do it?[72]

The student is then directed to let the instructor know when and if anything is done about the problem and how the problem works out.

All instructors of English on the college level as well as the high school level should make a direct appeal to the emotional center of students through assignments given; through instructional philosophy that comes through in lectures and discussions. The writer agrees with an existent belief which supports the idea that best motivation for learning focuses on the altar inside the individual as the appeal center. Making up this appeal center are the student's value system and philosophy of life. Vast are the implications of this for instructors of English.

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[72] Ibid., p. 92.

APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME OF INSTRUCTOR ____________________________

COURSE ____________________________________

LEVEL OR YEAR OF COURSE _______________________

(Signature indicates permission granted to quote for dissertation):

____
Instructor's Signature

INSTITUTION ___________________________________

Sample short essay questions given when testing students in the past:

I. ____

____

II. ____

____

III. ____

____

IV. ____

____

Long writing assignments given in the past (sample assignment):

I. ____

____

____

____

II. ____

____

____

____

Comments on general writing readiness (English composition) of students as revealed by their papers

Specific Weaknesses of Papers as they Apply to Composition

APPENDIX B

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY OF ESSAY WRITING PRINCIPLES

LAST NAME ______________________ FIRST NAME __________________

COURSE NAME AND MASTER NUMBER ________________________________

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. Use blue or black ink.

I. What is an essay?

II. What is a thesis sentence?

III. Write an example of a thesis sentence about automobile speed which could be used to begin an essay.

IV. What is a sentence fragment?

V. How does one eliminate a sentence fragment?

VI. What is a run-on sentence?

VII. What is a transitional expression?

VIII. List the eight parts of speech.

IX. What is meant by subject/verb agreement?

X. What use of imagery can be made by one as he writes an essay?

XI. What is the specific good associated with making an outline before a person writes an essay?

XII. How does a topic outline differ from a sentence outline?

XIII. List at least three methods of paragraph development.

XIV. What is a critical essay?

XV. What is one good specific way to conclude an essay?

XVI. What use can one make of allusions in essays?

XVII. What, if any, do you feel are your inadequacies in writing?

XVIII. To what do you attribute these inadequacies?

APPENDIX C

GRAMMAR DIAGNOSTIC

Last Name ______________________

First Name ______________________

Year in College ______________________

Age (optional) ______________________

Source: Workbook for
Writers by
Sachs et al.

DIAGNOSTIC TEST - ENGLISH

Parts of Speech: In the blanks to the right, put the part of speech of the italicized words.

1. The *guard* wore a *troubled* look. __________ __________
2. They *guard* the border very *well*. __________ __________

Subject and Verb: Write the simple subject (without modifiers) in the first blank and the verb in the second blank.

3. Not one of the players was hurt. __________ __________
4. High on the side of a mountain sits the little village. __________ __________
5. A few of the men were leaving. __________ __________

Modifiers: Underline incorrect modifier and write the correct form in the blank to the right.

6. You can do it easy, John; try it. __________
7. He worked fast and steady all afternoon. __________

Agreement: Underline each error in agreement and write the correct form in the blank to the right.

8. Each of the men finished their tasks. __________
9. My part to supervise were the field events. __________
10. Every citizen should consider it their duty to register and vote. __________

Pronouns: Write the correct form in the blank to the right.

11. Whom do you believe can do it for us? ______________

12. If I had been him, I would have refused. ______________

13. He could always run more quickly than me. ______________

Verb Forms: Write the correct form of the verb in the blank to the right.

14. He lay in bed all morning. ______________

15. He had eaten and drank too much. ______________

16. He sung that aria in every opera house in the world. ______________

Spelling: In the blank, spell the suggested italicized word in full.

17. *Sep_rate* the good from the bad. ______________

18. The weather here is highly *chang_ble*. ______________

19. Commencement is always a happy *oc_casion*. ______________

APPENDIX D

COMPOSITION DIAGNOSTIC

COMPOSITION DIAGNOSTIC

Last Name ______________________________

First Name ______________________________

Year in College ________________________

Name of College or University ______________________________

Using the best composition form, please respond to the following topic by Marie Leiderman: "You will be reborn tomorrow morning. You may come back as anything you choose except yourself. What would you like to come back as? Why?"

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

2839 Curie Place
San Diego, CA 92122

Dear Colleague:

I am doing a survey of composition errors made by college freshmen and would appreciate it if you would have several composition instructors fill out the enclosed forms. Would you have the students of several English class sections respond to the questionnaires which apply to them at the beginning of the fall semester 1976.

The results of the survey are needed for my dissertation, and it would be helpful to have your responses as part of the study.

*Please mark student response sheets remedial or regular.

Respectfully,

Juanita Wade

Enclosures: Instructor questionnaire
Student questionnaire - Essay Writing Principles
Grammar diagnostic
Composition diagnostic
Stamped return envelope

APPENDIX F

DETAILED INSTRUCTOR RESPONSES REGARDING ASSIGNMENTS

DETAILED INSTRUCTOR RESPONSES REGARDING ASSIGNMENTS

Most useful as a point of reference for essay questions to which college students might be exposed are instructor responses which the writer believes should be made available for study by beginning students in the English composition program. Being forearmed with a view of possible required essay writing situations, part of the shock which renders students wordless in writing situations can be measurably reduced.

Very directly beneficial are the following essay problems in their entirety submitted by the instructors involved in the survey. Frequency of use is as depicted in Tables 8 and 9.

Literary Subjects Reaction Required by Students

With regard to Swift's "Modest Proposal," note the distinction between author and persona. Where do you see the most of the persona viewing this? What does this tell you about Swift?

In Podhorety's essay, how were the two antagonistic groups--the Jews and Blacks--alike and how different?

After reading Swift's "Modest Proposal," write your own "modest proposal" for solving one of the problems confronting mankind today. It is not necessary to imitate or parody specific passages of Swift, though you may wish to do so; what is important is to keep in mind the rhetorical devices which Swift employs and to use them to advantage in your own argument. The more preposterous your proposal, the more seriously should it be set forth: construct an argument which, on its own terms, is impregnable.

Discuss Kesey's use of a first person narrator in Cuckoo's Nest. What effect does he achieve by having Chief Bromden tell the story?

Compare and contrast two articles on the same subject in Time and Newsweek. Consider language and logic.

Discuss social criticism in Catch-22. In what way does army life become a metaphor for society? In what ways does appearance take precedence over reality? How much is the human element taken into consideration within the world of this novel?

Write about a piece of prose that moved you deeply--not a visual experience, but a book, article, poem that you read. Explain why.

Examine Dickens' use of Biblical allusions throughout Hard Times.

Loren Eiseley's article argues that "The Uncompleted Man" creates his own future out of what he believes about himself. Comparing the witches in Macbeth to the modern scientists who claim to know what man is, he argues that the claims of such men are at best specious and at worst deadly. Just as he uses the extended analogy as a skeleton for the entire essay, he uses local analogies, metaphors, similes, and allusions to support and illustrate his thesis. What are these examples of figurative language, and how do they work? What relation do they bear to the whole? Could Eiseley have argued better in a plain discoursive style? Why (not)?

Trace Dickens' use of a single image pattern (animals, fire, smoke, light versus darkness, etc.) throughout Hard Times, examining its rhetorical and thematic purpose and effectiveness.

Choose a single passage in Cuckoo's Nest and give it the kind of close reading that will reveal significant observations about point of view, character, imagery and theme.

Respond to the short story "The Lottery" and to the movie of it. Compare and contrast or analyze the two forms.

The following selection (Steinbeck's "Good Guys and Bad Guys") illustrates several of the writing modes studied in this course. Read the selection carefully, and then write a well-organized essay in which you describe the author's use of modes in the selection.

"Truth generally is kindness, but when the two diverge and collide, kindness should override truth." Discuss this statement by Samuel Butler.

"Write while the heat is in you. When the farmer burns a hole in his yoke, he carries the hot iron quickly from the fire to the wood, for every moment it is less effectual to pierce it. It must be used instantly, or it is useless. The writer who postpones the recording of his thoughts uses an iron which has cooled to burn a hole with. He cannot inflame the minds of his audience." Thoreau. Does this hold true for all kinds of writing? If you have written poetry, you may wish to compare or contrast your own creative experiences with that which Thoreau describes. Is the statement valid in the case of expository prose? Even if it is, how practical is it?

Read the attached selection (from Crane's "The Monster") and construct a short but compact essay analyzing the power of the description.

Analyze your attitudes toward the use of slang--appropriateness, effectiveness, communicative value, rationale, etc.

Compare Catch-22 with Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. What similarities do you find in terms of literary techniques (especially in each author's methods of presenting logic and human) and in the overall atmosphere of the worlds of both works?

In the opening chapters of Catch-22, Heller identifies just about everyone and everything as "mad." Does he distinguish between different types of madness in the novel? Is there such a thing as "insane sanity" and "sane insanity" in this fictional world?

Apply Robert Lowell's poem "Sylvia Plath" to the major themes in the overall tone of Ariel. (If you like, you can disregard Lowell's poem and concentrate only on Plath's tone in selected poems in Ariel).

Discuss life and/or death imagery in Ariel. You may wish to examine only one image such as the moon, the yew tree, flowers, etc., or you may prefer to consider a series of images which fit under the category of life or death. Finally, you might want to take one life and one death image which counter-balance each other (bright color versus absence of color, movement versus statics, and so forth).

Compare one or two thematic aspects of Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar (death wish, social criticism, the conflict between the roles of artist and mother, simultaneous longing for and dread of merging with the world, etc.) with the poems of Ariel.

Apply one or two aspects of Laing's discussion of schizoid and schizophrenic personalities to Esther Greenwood in The Bell Jar.

How responsible is society for the inmates in the Cuckoo's Nest? What does McMurphy stand for in relation to the Combine? How would Kesey define madness?

In his third book, Garage Sale, Kesey mentions that he fashioned a "hero" for his novel who would supplement the inadequacies of the men whom he worked with on the ward at Menlo Veterans Hospital. How does McMurphy function in this respect? What symbolic or mythical figures does Kesey associate him with?

What motivates Iago in "Othello"? Discuss elements of irony in "Othello." These three theme topics will be written on the board on a Friday after a week has been used discussing "Othello." The students are instructed to select the topic they feel most comfortable in discussing and then to spend 45 minutes writing a theme on it.

In the play "Death of a Salesman," I use the following selections: Elements of Irony in "Death of a Salesman"; is "Death of a Salesman" true literary tragedy; the Great American Dream as portrayed in "Death of a Salesman."

Write a content study and a character analysis of Faulkner's "Barn Burning."

Personal Feelings Exploration

Write an essay in which you use analogy comparing the atom to the universe, or the human body to an automobile of your choice.

Write an essay on one of the following topics: how I decorate my favorite room; the characteristics of a true friend; respect for life; what's wrong with television; how popular music reflects our culture; what I do well.

Choose a historical figure (i.e., dead) who matters to you and explain why.

Write an essay in which you describe the worst or best place you have visited. Try to convey the emotions you experienced through details, examples or illustrations.

Write an essay in which you point out the conflicts that exist at times between the law and human values. Are there times when the law might be ignored?

Theme assignments are also given on the following topics: the necessity for belief in one's self, reasons why schools should (or should not) have a letter grading system, stimulating ideas I have obtained from my friends, what is wrong (or right) with current fashion.

Education can be regarded as a training for vocation or as preparation for all the experiences of life as a citizen. Think of your own motivations for being in the college that you have chosen and write an essay explaining them.

Write a theme using the following thesis: "Unexpected expenses often arise to take up any of the month's unbudgeted funds."

Analysis of Social Situations

Write an essay in which you argue the Black Men and Women's roles in television and the movies.

Explain through analysis what the following statement expresses: A surplus of individuals skilled in the preparation of edibles invariably contaminates the consomme.

Accord to Cadwallader, what burdens does the American middle class place upon marriage, and why can't the institutions bear the burdens?

Considering the popular myth that Americans love work, why do you think so many advertisements appeal to escape from work?

How does television reflect and affect the quality of our lives? Focus on one aspect such as a specific stereotype.

Argue for or against grouping the gifted students apart from the regular learners.

"(I)f you are writing without zest, without gusto, without love, without fun, you are only half a writer. . . . for the first thing a writer should be is--excited. He should be a thing of fevers and enthusiasms. Without such vigor, he might as well be out picking peaches or digging ditches; God knows it'd be better for his health."--Ray Bradbury, "The Joy of Writing." Agree or disagree. You will want to explain what Bradbury means by "excite(ment)." Do "zest," "gusto," "love," and "fun" suggest simply enjoyment of the act of writing or another kind of experience?

A New Yorker cartoon depicted the classic marriage proposal pose and had the suitor say, "Mary, will you be my first wife?" Why is this funny? Not funny? Discuss.

Argumentative Writing

Write a clear, coherent, logically developed essay that derives its thesis from an articular response to one of the following quotations: 1) "To save the Constitution we must first scrap the Bill of Rights."--Curtis Lemay; 2) "The new system of education as it seems to me, is training up a race of men who will be incapable of doing anything in the least disagreeable to them."--J. S. Mill; 3) "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of male chauvinism, of exploitation and depersonalization of the female."--Caroline Henessy.

Take the opposite side of an issue on which you feel strongly. That is, if you are ecologically minded, write an essay from the point of view of an oil company.

Research a controversial topic such as gun control and write a persuasive essay supporting your point of view.

Consider a standing practice in law and argue that it should be another way.

With the study of rhetoric comes a certain awareness of the power of language. Do you think that the advantages of this awareness outweigh the disadvantages, or vice versa?

Should every worker--including doctors, soldiers, policemen--have the right to strike? If so, why? If not, why not?

Speculate on the effects of the women's liberation movement on the next generation.

(Quotation). Do you agree with this author that anyone who can think clearly can write well, that style cannot be taught? Why or why not?

Explain ways in which the effect on society of the legislation of marijuana might differ from the effect of the legalization of alcohol.

What is the purpose of a university? Some professors seem to think it is a private reserve for their research. The Reagan administration thought it was a job-training factory. Surely the truth lies elsewhere. This is not a question of what you are doing here--though that could make up part of your answer--but a question about the purpose of the institution itself.

George P. Elliott's article seems finally to argue less "Against Pornography" than in favor of censorship. It exhibits other logical difficulties as well, though he does command a formidable rhetoric that gives the impression that he has adequately addressed the subject. Begin by taking a position either for or against the censoring of pornography and develop a coherent essay in which you show how Elliott could better have argued his case, or how, regardless of logic, he did the best he could with the position he took.

Comparative

Using the blocking technique, compare two people whom you greatly admire; or using interlocking techniques, contrast these people.

Write an essay in which you select three or four units of a specific class and contrast the strengths, weaknesses; or usefulness and inadequacies; beauties or deficiencies.

Compare and contrast home and the dormitory, or two poets, etc.

Contrast/compare the two philosophies behind "out of sight--out of mind" versus "absence makes the heart grow fonder."

Contrastive study of the effects on the individual and society of being racially prejudiced, racially tolerant, and racially empathetic.

Compare a specific thing with an abstract one to make the abstract thing more concrete.

Persuasive

Imagine you are writing a college text on composition--

gain the reader's attention, impress him with the importance of composition to him, and outline the topics that you would cover.

Choose one topic, such as euthanasia, education, women's rights, marijuana, and write a logical, convincing support of one side.

Write to a company and demand your money back for a product or service with which you were dissatisfied.

Description

Describe a simple subject.

Describe an abstract ideal.

Meditate on an object. What does it suggest to you?

Write a process paragraph: Describe how you accomplish some task.

Describe a learning experience in which you discovered something new about yourself or the world. Focus on the incident, place or person that caused the change of mind you experienced.

Interview an assigned classmate, collecting information about him or her, which you will then incorporate into a character sketch, a biography, or an evaluation for a job.

Assignments given by most instructors involved in the survey provided opportunities for the student in self-examination, life situations such as interviews and job qualifications, television evaluation, reminiscences, and evaluation of literature. Many assignments are geared to the importance of the student's knowing himself and for becoming a part of a certain morality goal.

Write three accounts of the same scene, event, object, person, etc. In your first account, write a factual description using concrete evidence, neutral language, and objective tone. In your second and third accounts, write slanted descriptions, using biased evidence, connotative language, and subjective tone. The difference between your second and third accounts will be that one should create a favorable impression of the object described while the other should create an unfavorable impression of it. With the exception of the interpretation put on the evidence, the same details should be included in each account. Do not tell the reader what to think by simply labeling your object (that is, be sparing in your use of general statements shuch as "Ruth was slovenly") but make him draw his own conclusions (the conclusions, of course, which you want him to draw) from the concrete detail you present ("Ruth's matted hair dangled around the shoulders of her once-white T-shirt" leaves no doubt that she is slovenly but does not come right out and say the word). Each account should run approximately one page.

Rhetorical

Consider the language of one of the following areas: popular songs, jazz, protest literature, law, science, history, education, etc. Try to determine the underlying assumptions of usages and levels of usage, implied attitudes, etc.

Read and comment on the attached student theme as if you are an objective, constructive English instructor.

Different kinds of writers treat the same topic in different ways. Select a topic (love, death, gun control, time, sex, the ecology movement, for example) and describe how, say, an essayist, a fiction writer, a poet, a journalist, and an advertising writer would approach it. Describe in detail--avoid generalities and obivous points. Or, if you prefer, write a paragraph (or stanza) in the style and method of each.

Choose a short passage of modern English fiction and write an analysis of its purpose, structure, use of language, use of rhetorical devices.

Analyze the language used and its purpose and impact, variety or sameness, in a selection of advertisements in a single field (automobiles, liquor, cigarettes, perfume, life insurance, food products, etc.) Note diction, connotatively loaded words and phrases, and abstract or general as opposed to specific terms. What appeal or image does an ad writer try to create for his product by using a certain word? You may wish to examine the difference in appeal between an ad in a popular magazine and one for the same product in a technical journal.

Compare a passage from the King James version of the Bible with its counterpart in another translation or translations, examining diction, figurative language, sentence structure, tone, etc. How do the differences in language between two translations create differences in meaning (denotative and connotative)?

Select a poem (monologue or description) or an extended speech or descriptive passage from a prose work and analyze authorial manipulation of reader response through word choice, imagery (note any patterns of recurring images), tone, the use of a persona (if applicable), the organization of an argument or the presentation of ideas.

Choose an extended descriptive passage and analyze it linguistically and rhetorically, keeping in mind the following points, but being careful to avoid mere listing or answering questions as you do so: 1) trace the direction of movement of the description (does the author take us from general premises to concrete illustrations?); 2) what methods does he use to organize and unify the passage (comparison, analogy, example, transitional devices, point of view, any patterns of imagery?); 3) analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of sentence structure, diction, figurative language, and imagery (what is the author's purpose in evoking certain images and associations?); and 4) does the passage reinforce thematic concerns of the novel?

Trace Dickens' use of a single image pattern (animals, fire, smoke, light versus darkness, etc.) throughout the novel, examining its rhetorical and thematic purpose and effectiveness.

Consider language as a medium of communication between the characters in Hard Times, noting how the same words can assume different overtones in the mouths of different characters. What comment is Dickens trying to make in each case? (Some passages you might wish to examine: Slackbridge's oratory and Stephen's response, pp. 105-116; of Bounderby and Gradgrind, pp. 180-186; of Gradgrind and Bitzer, pp. 217-219.)

Examine Dickens' use of Biblical allusions throughout the novel.

Consider the language of one of the following: 1) Popular songs--analyze in detail two or three songs, both individually and in comparison with each other, or discuss a linguistic trend or trends in one genre (love songs, satire, war protest songs, etc.) or the works of one songwriter; 2) comic books (one series only) or a comic strip--does the writer use linguistic traits to characterize his characters, are they effective and in what way, to what other effects does he use language, does he create linguistic leit-motifs?; 3) protest literature or propaganda--how does a writer use loaded language to manipulate reader response, what images does he evoke and to what purpose?; and 4) your suggestion.

A comparison/contrast analysis of McWilliams' and Smith's accounts of the Owens Valley Affair: Carey McWilliams in "The Owens Valley Tragedy" (Southern California: An Island on the Land) and Dave Smith in "70-Year Water Dispute: Fact, Fable Hard to Separate" (L.A. Times, December 1, 1974) give two, usually contrasting, accounts of the Owens Valley Affair. In this essay, you are to examine the similarities and differences between these two articles in thesis, mode, tone, organization, argumentative techniques (as covered in text), use of language, and in a brief way, sentence structure. As always, the purpose of this analysis is to reach a critical thesis about the two articles: does McWilliams or Smith, based on your insights from applying various critical techniques to their articles, offer the most convincing account? After stating your thesis, and its major supportive issues in the introductory paragraph, you should first compare whatever similarities exist, then contrast the differences. You may choose to organize your essay around specific logical, rhetorical, and stylistic devices, or around specific points of agreement and conflict. Either of these methods is acceptable, and both avoid a repetitive, boring chronological analysis. (Since many university professors frequently assign the comparison-contrast essay, this should provide useful practice for those who select this topic.)

"Men of Vision" or "Men of Greed and Power"? An Analysis Contrasting Smith's Account of the Owens Valley Affair with that Presented in Roman Polanski's film "Chinatown," with emphasis on the Role of Ruling Class Men in each: In "70-Year Water Dispute: Fact, Fable Hard to Separate," Dave Smith presents a tolerant and at times sympathetic view of Mulholland and his associates' role in the Owens Valley Affair, while Polanski in Chinatown presents an opposite view, primarily through his portrayal of Noah Cross. In this essay, you are to examine how the author's and filmmaker's views of ruling class men shape their explanations of what each considers the "real" story of the Owens Valley Affair. In the first half of the essay, analyze Smith's treatment of the men involved by applying the various critical techniques discussed this quarter (tone, language, etc.): in short, write a critical analysis which focuses on Smith's "men of vision." (You may bring in McWilliams here for contrast, if you wish.) The second section of the paper is more free-wheeling. For example, you may choose to incorporate McWilliams (chapters 5 and 10); to discuss the significance of Chinatown, traditionally a sterectypical Anglo symbol for corruption and degeneracy, as an ironic symbol for a larger and more sinister type of corruption; to explore the characterization of Noah Cross as well as J. J. Cittes and Evelyn Mulwray; to discuss how the film's costumes, sets, make-up and music enhance Polanski's view of "men of greed and power." Finally, you should specify which account seems most effective, and most true.

The assignment is an analysis in four pages (1000 words) of former President Nixon's first Watergate speech. The purpose of this systematic analysis is to reach a critical thesis about the speech as a whole. Your thesis, the central statement of your critical purpose and insight in the paper, should be the core of your introductory paragraph, and should be supported in the body of the paper with selected, accurate, and specific evidence from the text. For example, a reasonable thesis about the passage Crews cites from Mein Kampf (pp. 57-58) might be: Hitler does not present a convincing argument against the mixing of races because he misrepresents "Nature's" powers, he refuses to allow for any exceptions, surprises, or missing information, he lacks sufficient evidence for his claims, and he uses the catch-all explanation." In turn, your evidence should be organized and presented ("argued") in the manner most supportive of your thesis. Note: The way in which you reached your insights may not be the best way to explain them in the paper. Plan the step from reading to writing. Your analysis of the speech in preparation for writing the paper should employ as rigorously and as imaginatively as possible the various critical techniques we will have considered in Crews by the 10/13/75 class meeting. Moreover, it is important that you not only attempt to pinpoint these techniques, but also attempt to analyze why they are being used. For example, Nixon uses many clichés throughout the speech. What purpose or purposes do they serve? Does he attempt to "identify" with the American people through their use? Or do you feel he wishes to convince us of his sincerity? Neither? Both? What other reasons can you think of? Finally, you should attempt to evaluate the success of the kinds of logical and language devices Nixon employs. (Such evaluation might, in fact, make an excellent conclusion for your essay.)

(Continued) In addition to the issues raised in Crews, your paper should include an analysis, or at least a description, of the speech's overall structure. Some basic questions to consider would be: does the writer make clear the organizational pattern? Is a pattern implied? Consider the organizational statements (or lack of them) at the beginning of the speech/essay. What are the speech's principal divisions?

(Continued) A word of caution: because of the "new information" revealed concerning the Watergate Affair over the last two years, you may be tempted to go beyond the confines of the speech. If you wish to bring in such information to illuminate particular aspects of the speech, fine. However, don't get carried away with "exposing" Nixon yourself; concentrate on analyzing the text.

(Continued) In general, try to make the style of your paper simple, direct, and specific, addressed to a reader who has read the text of the speech but is interested in the insights your particular analysis reveals.

Definition

Discuss how you came to the practical definition of an abstract term.

Explain the concept of peace by using at least three aspects of the analogy of your choice.

"The novel tells a story. That is the fundamental aspect without which it could not exist. That is the highest factor common to all novels, and I wish it was not so, that it could be something different--melody, or perception of the truth, not this low stavistic form."--E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel. Your essay should involve your own definition of the novel, either established at the outset for use in your discussion or worked out in the course of your response to the above quote.

"There is a word which we all use daily, although now it hasn't much sense. 'Tis a village word, and language preserves it from disappearing. That word is 'the Neighbour.' Once there was no more powerful and meaningful word than that, but now it only refers to the perfect stranger who goes to bed next door to you, and whom you sometimes hear and never see."--James Stephens, "Villages." You may want to consider what being a neighbor does or should involve--and how present-day society measures up to your definition.

Write an essay responding to one of the following quotes, drawing on your own ideas and/or experiences but keeping in mind the context in which you are working. Thus be sure that you know what Thoreau means when he uses such words as "education" and "heat" (or what Bradbury means by "excited"), though you may choose in the course of the essay to provide your own definitions and distinguish them from the author's. Suggestions for organizing your essay follow each quote:

"What does education often do? It makes a straight-cut ditch of a free, meandering brook."--Henry David Thoreau, Journal. Agree and/or disagree. You may want to try to define education; you will certainly want to describe its effect on the individual. If you feel comfortable with metaphor, you might expand and sustain Thoreau's as one means of unifying your discussion and giving it an added dimension.

Instructor Survey: Writing Readiness

Responses from teachers surveyed with regard to the point of student writing readiness indicate that a great deal of the responsibility for lack of writing readiness may be placed with television and earphones. Also, it is felt that the present generation "suckled" by television is primarily a generation that does not dwell at length with materials of literary excellence. Thus, there is lack of experience with the printed word.

Great is the deficiency in essay organization and coherence according to professors surveyed. It would appear to this writer that there are only "fits and starts" in composition writing backed by what the students think "ought to do" in the way of completing an assignment. Also revealed by the survey is a general inability of the student to argue convincingly or to support many glittering generalities with specifics or logic. All is fragmented.

Basic grammar and sentence structure problems are readily revealed. Some instructors say that "writing readiness" is hardly the word for the predicament in which students are found. Rather, students may be described as being hardly able to articulate their ideas.

Institution E offers an evaluation of the results of topics for 500 word exposition papers assigned to a class of twenty-four.

Topic I	Death	Difficult but well done
Topic II	War	Easier than above

Topic III	Choice of Sports in High School - OR - College Goals	Well done Poorly done
Topic IV	Teachers (comparison)	Well done
Topic V	Choice of Law Enforcement - OR - Welfare and the Poor	Half - poor Very poor
Topic VI	Self-Portraits	Extremely accurate

1. Students fail to grasp the overall structure of the essay and do not seem to understand the concept of paragraphing

2. "Many of my students have had such little experience writing that they have great apprehension about writing any sort of papers. Writing is a foreign behavior, one they fear; consequently, they often attempt to "formalize" their own language patterns to make them conform to their notion of elevated diction or propriety. The result is awkward and wordy constructions, inflated diction, pretentious vocabulary. . . ." (Instructor Survey Response, Institution H.)

Institution E responses with regard to writing readiness of students as they enter the college English program reveal that at least one-quarter of the students in one class need a "mini-course" on basics such as grammar and mechanics of sentence structure before they can be taught organization and idea development. In some instances, there is an indication that few come ready to present a clear, convincing argument; students lack critical preparation. A professor from Institution E, responding to the Instructor Survey, said:

> A majority of the students seem inadequately prepared in grammar, spelling and vocabulary to cope with the rigors

> of college-level writing. Furthermore, only a handful seem to appreciate the more subtle aspects of writing, such as use of concrete examples to support a generalization or abstraction, and the art of visualizing the audience that they are addressing and choosing specific and appropriate diction or argument for this audience.

In addition to this comment on writing readiness, another professor from Institution E added:

> . . . Because freshmen have not read widely, their ideas are narrow and rigid and they have difficulty expressing themselves on topics which are not personal, i.e., government, university objectives, etc. Students are "ready" to write after a small amount of help (topic sentence, supporting ideas, conclusions) and much encouragement to read widely--newpapers, magazines, textbooks, fiction.

Yet another professor from the same institution commented:

> Students often express surprise at my expectations regarding the technical quality of their papers. "In my high school, my teacher was concerned with my thoughts, what I had to say, not with every misspelling or grammatical error." I had heard this argument approximately a dozen or so times; it seems to say something about current high school teaching methods and to suggest perhaps the most central cause of the decline in writing ability which is so oft talked about these last few years.

Included with the response from Institution F was the following material which was used as a final examination in English 102 in the fall of 1975. When examined, the text will reveal writing situations to which students must respond.

> As your recall, there are four kinds of writing--description, narration, exposition, and persuasion. In the course of this semester we have also looked at a number of patterns of organization, including process analysis, cause and effect analysis, example, definition, classification, comparison, and contrast. In addition, we have considered from time to time the qualities of good writing in general. These qualities include a clear and limited central idea, concrete and relevant supporting ideas, coherent and lucid expression, and adherence to the standards of conventional English.
>
> Your assignment for this, your final writing assignment for English 102, is to write an essay approximately 300 words long. You should write in ink in a test booklet.

Prepare an outline and a rough draft. Make your essay short enough to allow you time to revise where necessary. Choose your topic from the list below, keeping in mind that some of the topics may be inappropriate as they appear and must be narrowed or rephrased.

You may use a dictionary, a thesaurus, or any other handbook you choose. You should not, however, find it necessary to communicate with anyone except your instructor.

Description:

1. A jet flight
2. A hog killing
3. Life in a dormitory
4. Two people in love
5. A doctor's/dentist's office
6. An electric fan
7. An electric shaver
8. A microscope

Classification:

1. High schools
2. Drivers
3. Pests
4. Insults
5. Marriages
6. Athletes
7. Personalities

Comparison/Contrast:

1. Youth vs. maturity
2. Fake vs. genuine
3. Liberal vs. conservative
4. Prejudice vs. hate
5. What I am vs. what I want to be
6. Epicurean vs. stoic
7. Dictionary vs. encyclopedia

Persuasion:

1. Rationing gasoline
2. Prohibition of alcohol
3. Bringing back the whipping post
4. Open dorm visitation
5. Making hunting illegal
6. Campus police should or should not be armed

Process Analysis:

1. How to change a tire
2. How to make a salad (or some other food)
3. How to write a good essay
4. How to take a shower
5. How to decorate a Christmas tree
6. How to clean a bird cage
7. How to choose a pair of shoes

Responses from Institution F reveal that specific weaknesses of composition involve difficulties in presenting a logically reasoned argument, difficulties in designing introductions and conclusions, lack of sufficient concrete detail, weaknesses in thesis statement formation, inability to handle basic grammatical issues, lack of revision, lack of planning, clumsy or inadequate transition, triteness, paragraph coherence, and a widespread inability to organize thoughts effectively.

With regard to general writing readiness, one professor says:

> Most of my students have no problem with locating something to say; their difficulty arises when they begin to express their thought in effective and coherent writing. I suggest, because of the emphasis upon prescriptive grammar we have had, that college students are not confident about using their language in writing (or formal speaking for that matter).

Shedding additional light on general writing readiness is the response of another instructor, also from Institution F, who said:

> The number of students who appear in my classes with a firm grasp of composition skills is small. Often students who have problems in my freshman class come to me bewildered because they feel utterly unprepared to handle composition assignments; their high school or preparatory instructors frequently have treated them to sessions intended to acquaint them with some phase of literature or creative writing. The latter has its merits, but a total sacrifice of teaching designed to stimulate development of logical and rhetorical skills in order to promote a student's "feel for his culture" or some such vagary is nonsensical.

A professor of Institution F offered a response which lent further justification for this study:

> Most of my students seem preoccupied with the mechanics of writing, not the substance. Their preparation in high school has given them a fairly proficient--not flawless by any means, though--command of the use of commas, periods, semicolons and capitalization. Their weaknesses seem to lie in their being unable to say clearly what they have on their mind. Those who can communicate on paper frequently have nothing of consequence to say. The general writing readiness of my students then is shown as an ability to organize, express themselves clearly, or revise what needs

changing. (Fixing the blame for lack of "writing readiness" is not easy. I suggest it lies in too much literature, too much "relevance" and too little writing.)

A sample examination was included at this point to illustrate the requirement and "readiness" demanded of the student finishing a composition course under the tutelage of this professor at Institution F. It is interesting to note that English 102, the second semester of freshman composition, is one of two courses required of all students in attendance, the other course being English 101.

The combined enrollment, according to the professor, was fifty-two with twenty-five students in Section 10 and twenty-seven in Section 11. Section 10 was made up of students scoring 28 or highter on the ACT. The grade distribution provided by this professor for December 1975 is as follows, according to his response to the Instructor Survey:

	A	B	C	D	F	I	W	TOTALS
Section 10	4	14	3	3	1	0	0	25
Section 11	4	6	7	9	1	0	0	27

Instructor Survey: Specific Weaknesses in Composition

Responses from Institution B indicate that as students begin the English composition course, there are too many sentence fragments; general grammatical awareness is weak; awareness of third person subject-verb agreement is lacking. Noted have been the many perceptual mistakes in writing words and inability to quote correctly or adequately. Lack of variety and lackluster subjects chosen by students are of major concern also.

As is the case in four-year universities and colleges, there are "one-time writers" in the first-year composition courses. This group has been identified by one professor as those who once having written the idea, mold the thought into perma concrete. Characteristically, students of this ilk do not improve upon sentence structure or the original writing concept itself. Recognition that the organization could be improved, that it could be given an intriguing title, that there might possibly be grammatical errors which could be eliminated is lacking.

Specific areas of writing problems as set forth by Institution E are lack of strong support for topic sentences, value judgments presumed to be facts, lack of creativity in using quotations and statistics to support ideas, failure, on the part of some, to recognize fragments or run-on sentences, faulty pronoun reference, and dangling modifiers.

Of these weaknesses, one professor of this institution says that there seems to be an "unwillingness to revise which means that many papers turned in are first drafts, essentially--I think this problem stems from a romantic notion that writers are inspired and therefore cannot write on demand."

Additionally, the following points of weakness were mentioned:

> 1. . . .Some of my students have never had a composition graded for its mechanics and construction. Several have avoided writing papers altogether in high school, while others have written several college term papers. My problem, then, is to find a way and time to address the basic problems of one group (inexperience, fear, and no prior instruction in grammar or composition) without boring those ready for more sophisticated challenges.

This comment was made by a professor from Institution E as part of his response to the Instructor Survey.

2. Focus--clarity
3. Failure to back up point-of-view
4. Poor organization of ideas
5. Failure to establish logical or natural connection between ideas.

Specific Weaknesses in Compositions - Institutions A, B, and C:

With regard to the specifics of composition, the responses from Institutions A, B, and C revealed that the following were the major weaknesses in student papers:

1. Subject-verb, noun-pronoun agreement
2. Unnecessary tense shift
3. Comma splices
4. Sentence fragments
5. Dangling and misplaced modifiers
6. Faulty paragraph division (declared whimsically by one)
7. Lack of transition between paragraphs and between sentences within a paragraph
8. General or abstract language
9. Inability to take a stand on a subject (thesis)
10. Inaccuracy of expression
11. Inability to spell
12. Punctuation
13. Lack of needed modification
14. Smooth incorporation of quotes
15. Faulty conclusions

16. Misuse of possessives
17. Wordiness
18. Lack of essay organization
19. Vagueness
20. Conversational diction

One institution, having been inundated with previous survey requests, responded with a general description of the goals of the freshman English class, without being prescriptive insofar as methods are concerned. Without benefit of survey, this writer feels that the goals having been set as such may give some indication as to previously diagnosed areas of writing weakness as well as areas which by way of professional opinion merit attention to produce good effective writers. Very specifically, the goals are as follows:

Composition 1-001: By the end of the quarter, students should be able to write a unified and coherent 500-word essay of analysis on an assigned topic. By the end of the quarter, each student should have written approximately twenty pages including revisions. Required course content involves prewriting, organization, structure, revisions, basic logic and use of evidence.

Composition 1-002: By the end of the quarter, students should be able to write a 700-1000 word essay in which they demonstrate an ability to use a variety of expository modes and strategies, write for different audiences or for different occasions, and recognize and manipulate observable stylistic features of their own prose. By the end of the quarter, each student should have written approximately twenty pages including revisions. Subject matter for this phase of English involves prewriting, organization, structure, revision, basic logic and use of evidence as in English 1-001.

Notable as features of work at this institution is the introduction of "personna," personal style, persuasive writing in the first course. It is felt by the department chairperson's response that failure to control any of the aforementioned aspects results in failure of the entire communication; thus a student is prepared for these points which are emphasized in detail in Composition 1-002.

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ABSTRACT

WRITING PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE FRESHMEN

AN ANALYSIS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the regional extent of the syndrome of writing inadequacy among students in first-year college and university composition classes, to identify and categorize errors, to determine what instructors as well as students felt about first-year composition inadequacies, and to provide a profile of composition errors which could lead to a productive methodological approach to minimize the errors.

The study was limited to thirty-one instructors and to students varying in number up to 231 from the northeastern, southeastern, central, and western regions of the United States, responding to a survey testing competency with essay writing principles, grammar, and composition writing.

Instructors unanimously agreed that grammatical and compositional skills possessed by students in freshman composition classes were insufficient to produce college-level essays and term papers. It was found that geographical areas have significant influence on student scores and, while students enrolled in the regular English classes scored higher on the National Student Survey, both regular and remedial students could profit from programs designed to improve basic English skills.

Examination of the findings revealed the need for

additional required courses in teaching methods and required courses which would insure instructor knowledge of subject matter which cannot be assumed simply because one is an instructor of English. These courses would be designed to provide a complete and thorough command of the grammatical foundations for effective compositional skills and an expertise in conveying grammatical and compositional skills to freshman English classes.

Upon completion of the freshman composition classes, students should be well on their way to developing their own style, the fundamentals of composition writing having become an integral part of their approach to any college writing situation.

Chapter I presents the Introduction, Chapter II is a Review of Literature, Chapter III provides Population, Instruments, Procedures, Instructions and Scoring, Chapter IV presents the Findings, and Chapter V presents Conclusions and Recommendations.